



*The Teachers' Library*

*Edited by*

*F. W. Westaway*

The Teaching of  
English and Handwriting

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# The Teaching of English and Handwriting

BY

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# PREFACE

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The volumes of *The Teachers' Library* have been planned for the guidance of teachers whose daily work is concerned with children of eight and upwards. The teacher's personal responsibility is now greater than it has ever been, and the general demand that the work of the school shall be linked up more and more closely with the future work of the child is becoming increasingly clamant. This necessitates a clearer understanding of the special needs of individual pupils; and in order to cope adequately with the many consequential problems that will thus confront him, the teacher will find it necessary not only to revise many of his working principles and much of his practice, but to strengthen his professional equipment. Confidence is felt that in all these ways the volumes will be of great service; they have not been written for the educational theorist, but for the teacher enmeshed in practical difficulties.

The writers of the different volumes bear names well known to the majority of teachers. They have long been recognized as experts in their respective departments, and their opinions and advocacy of particular principles and methods are the fruit of their successful experience in teaching. All the writers have purposely devoted themselves mainly to the practical side of their subjects, and have touched upon theoretical considerations only very lightly. For principles of a more general kind readers may supplement these volumes by reference to such a book as Ward and Roscoe's *The Approach to Teaching*,

and to the works of Professor Sir Percy Nunn and Professor Sir John Adams.

Differences of opinion among the authors are not numerous, but there are some. This is of no consequence—indeed, it is something of an advantage for two opposing suggestions sometimes to be made.

Contributors have not been altogether consistent in their references to the various types of schools, but this will cause no difficulty to readers. The three principal grades of Elementary Schools in the future will be determined by fairly clear-cut age ranges. The names now in most common use are:

- (a) Up to 8 years—Infants, Kindergarten.
- (b) 8–11 years—Junior, Preparatory.
- (c) 11–15 years—Senior, Central.

With the first of these *The Teachers' Library* is not concerned. Greater stress has not unnaturally been laid on the third group than on the second, though an adequate treatment of the various subjects has necessitated the giving of considerable attention to junior work as well as to senior.

F. W. W.

*April, 1932.*

# CONTENTS

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## ENGLISH

CHAP.		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION - - - - -	1
II.	THE JUNIOR SCHOOL - - - - -	9
III.	POST-PRIMARY ENGLISH - - - - -	23
IV.	THE WRITING OF ENGLISH - - - - -	37
V.	CREATIVE WORK - - - - -	65
VI.	THE TIME-TABLE AND THE TESTING OF ENGLISH	88
VII.	GRAMMAR AND PHILOLOGY - - - - -	97
VIII.	ENGLISH IN ITS RELATION TO OTHER SUBJECTS -	110
IX.	DRAMA IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE SCHOOL -	116
X.	THE SCHOOL MAGAZINE - - - - -	122

## HANDWRITING

I.	INTRODUCTION - - - - -	125
II.	SCRIPT WRITING - - - - -	127
III.	THE MECHANISM OF WRITING - - - - -	143



# ENGLISH

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Without attempting invidious comparisons of the various subjects which go to make up the modern curriculum, we may assert that no subject is so important as English. Upon the pupil's success with the various departments of his English studies will depend the extent of his communication with his fellow men, and his capacity for entering into and understanding the thought of others. Since, too, all his own thinking will be but the development of the thought of those who have gone before him, as well as of those amongst whom he lives, it is no exaggeration to say that the quality and depth of his own mental life will depend almost entirely upon his mastery of the English language. Everything he receives from others, everything he gives to his fellows, is intimately bound up with English, and is dependent upon the extent to which he has mastered the arts of writing and reading his mother tongue.

So much is obvious to anyone who reflects at all upon the matter, but nevertheless it is a fact that the importance of English has not been generally recognized in schools. There are reasons for this, which must presently be discussed. It has been taken for granted that the pupils speak and read

English, and that all English teachers are competent to teach the subject. Books have not always been well chosen from the point of view of English, even though as sources of information they may be excellent; and, even when they have been obtained as accessories of the teaching of English, they have not been selected with the same care and discrimination which is given to the choice of a textbook of mathematics or chemistry.

### The Teacher

The teaching of English in some schools, in brief, has only too often been a haphazard matter. The subject has seemed, in the words of the report of the Departmental Committee, something "to be entrusted to any member of the staff who had some free time at his disposal".<sup>1</sup> To some extent, the elementary and secondary schools have followed the older practice of the public schools. But whereas in the latter there was ground for the belief that correct English might be "picked up" through daily life and contacts, there was none at all for thinking that the majority of pupils attending the elementary and secondary schools could ever learn correct usage of English through listening to the people amongst whom they lived. The public schools have come to realize that definite instruction must be given if pupils are to speak and read and write well, and to learn how to distinguish good literature from bad or commonplace; and discerning teachers in the elementary and central schools, who have long realized the need of such instruction, are still seeking ways and means of ensuring that the teaching may be such that the majority, if not all, of their pupils shall leave them with the capacity to write clearly, to read intelligently, and to enjoy good literature and receive inspiration from it. Clearly, such work cannot be done by everyone. It is necessary, then, to inquire what are the special qualifications which fit teachers for the

<sup>1</sup> *The Teaching of English in England*, pp. 9-10 (His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921).

task of teaching English. The first of these, essential in teachers of juniors and seniors alike, is the ability to read well and to write simply and clearly. The fact ought to be faced squarely that not all teachers are capable of doing either.

To read well seems to be a very simple matter. It is not. Fluency, ease, and just expression are not easily acquired. Fluency calls for perfect mastery of the sheer mechanics of reading, the ability to read well ahead of the words which are being actually uttered, as well as ease of utterance. Ease adds something to this requirement; calling not merely for mastery, but for mastery without obvious effort. Fluency and ease most people can attain, if they will but practise enough. "Just expression" falls within a different category. It implies something more than sheer mechanical mastery of a series of words. It implies a mastery of their meaning and the capacity to convey this meaning by the proper use of the voice. Words are grouped into phrases which are distinguished from one another by pauses of the proper length. The pitch of the reader's voice varies, rising and falling. The tone changes from soft to loud. The rate alters from rapid to slow and deliberate. People who can read with ease and fluency are not uncommon, but those able to read with just expression are rare. Only these rare people can be safely entrusted with the teaching of English.

From teachers of juniors we expect not merely the ability to write simple and clear English and the ability to read well, but also some knowledge of the proper method of dealing with these subjects in class. The teacher, that is to say, should have acquired, through training or some adequate substitute for it, a knowledge of how to assist children to acquire the arts of reading and writing.

From teachers of seniors we expect this and something more. The senior pupil's tasks are more difficult than those of the junior pupil, naturally, but we find with him the necessity of something more than mere achievement. He needs to know, not merely how to write correct English, but why



this English is correct; not merely how to avoid errors, but why these are errors to be avoided. The teacher must possess knowledge which, though an asset to a teacher of juniors, is not, in his case, indispensable.

The day is past when such knowledge could be gathered, for the purpose of a single lesson or a series of lessons, from the notes appended to a cram-book. The university degree, sometimes a degree in honours, is nowadays often demanded from the teacher of senior pupils, not because a university degree has necessarily any great value in itself, but because it is a guarantee that a man has seriously studied his subject under the direction of an authority upon it, has made investigations at first hand, and has acquainted himself with methods of gathering information for himself. In other words, we require the university degree, not only as an indication of the possession of information, but as some assurance of a correct attitude towards a subject. There is no suggestion in this that we do not find qualifications of the highest character in men without university degrees: no experienced teacher would make so stupid an assertion. But for the teacher of seniors we demand qualifications of the sort which are indicated by the possession of a university degree; and appointing authorities, seeking such qualifications and unable to examine candidates themselves, will naturally prefer to appoint increasingly in the future men whose work has received the hall mark of university approval.

Something more, however, is required—something which cannot be assured by the possession of any university degree whatsoever. This is a real enthusiasm for the subject, coupled with a fine taste for what is good in literature, and linked to an ability to inspire this enthusiasm and communicate this taste to others. There is no paper qualification which can guarantee this: it can be recognized only by another who is quite or nearly an equal.

There is no doubt that such a taste can be cultivated, and the teacher who wishes to make himself a worthy teacher of

English must cultivate it. He can do this only by reading constantly the best literature he is able to obtain. He must, in the first instance, follow sure guides. If he follows long enough, and not blindly, he will come in good time to know the way himself. He will come to know the good from the merely meretricious. He will gain in the actual process of learning a valuable knowledge of the difficulties in the way of true literary appreciation, and this will be of inestimable service to him when he comes to teach.

### General Teaching Method

Here, at the beginning, before we proceed to the discussion of detailed syllabuses and methods of teaching, one point must be insisted upon; a point generally ignored in textbooks and constantly overlooked by even the best teachers. This is the *child's motive*. Consider a concrete instance. A poem has been read to a class, and the children have enjoyed it thoroughly. The teacher tells them to rewrite the poem in their own words. Later, she is disappointed with the result—that is all to the good, perhaps. But she is inclined to believe that the poor reproduction proves that she has failed to make them appreciate the poem: there she is wrong. Why should children, because they have appreciated a beautiful poem, want to rewrite it in their own imperfect way? Does not the wish to rewrite it rather show that the child has failed to appreciate properly? If a child is pleased when he has reproduced a Constable landscape with crayons from a penny box, does he not show at once that he fails to see the original picture as he should? If a teacher has really led children to a true appreciation of a little masterpiece, of poetry or prose or painting, the children will be satisfied with it. They will not want to reproduce it in their own way. If they do not *want* to do it, motive is absent, and the work will be badly done.

Again, the child who has appreciated a piece of perfect prose knows very well, in advance, that his efforts to rewrite it will fail. He cannot achieve the perfection of the original.

Consequently, when we set him this particular task, we are asking him to do something which he knows he will do badly. He has no motive for doing what we ask, but he has a real and strong motive for refusing. In connexion with English studies, we are constantly asking the child to perform tasks which are not intrinsically of great interest. Reading, writing, and spelling are in part mechanical tasks, somewhat dull in their nature. Every adult can see a number of reasons why the child should master these arts, but only those who have a real insight into child life and an understanding of the child's outlook are able to appeal directly to the child's own motives. It is useless to try to stimulate an infant to write well by telling him that good writing is a help to getting a business post in later life (though something of the kind is often done). But the desire to make his own Christmas cards or to write a letter to a loved relative can be a very real stimulus. The writing of invitations to a party, a concert, or a dramatic performance in the classroom may be used as a motive for good writing and correct spelling. Towards Christmas time, children will learn to spell the names of the objects they desire as gifts, so that they may write readable letters to Santa Claus.

The desire to be like someone who is admired, the desire to please a loved person, the desire to excel, the desire to beat a rival, the desire to achieve a result—all these are motives which the wise teacher will utilize. He will discover that they vary greatly at different ages and in individual children. The teacher of English will not waste his time if he watches his class at play, trying to discover how the energy directed towards games can be directed towards English work. He will note the conditions and forms of verbal expression in connexion with playground activities. Mr. Caldwell Cook has already demonstrated, in his work at the Perse School and in *The Play Way*, that the play spirit can be introduced with advantage into the classroom. Teachers may not be able to copy Mr. Caldwell Cook—indeed they should not, since mere imitation is opposed entirely to the whole spirit of his

work—but they should undoubtedly try to acquire for themselves something of his outlook.

We may sum this up by saying that the teacher should so try to organize the life and activities of the class that mastery of English work shall be a real advantage to the child in the classroom; adding to his opportunities of distinction and to his happiness. This child keeps a class record because he writes so clearly, another calls a roll because his enunciation is so good. Competition for rôles in class plays incites children to speak well. Opportunities for lecturing, reciting, and reading to the class are the rewards of excellence. Not only the personal praise of the teacher (though discriminating praise is worth much) but honoured participation in the life of the class, follows good work in English, and cannot be obtained without it. The teacher is constantly making use of the child's own motives. The children are co-operating with him in the work of the school. He is enlisting the whole of their efforts, which was never the case when the mechanical parts of English teaching were taught through drills, mainly unintelligent, enforced by the punishment of the unwilling.

### **The Teacher's Library**

A word or two should be said about the teacher's library. The teacher of English will constantly meet with material in newspapers, magazines, and in books which will suit his purpose far better than that which he will find in textbooks written for him; or which will, at least, supplement this matter. It may be a brief, well-written article dealing with a topic of current interest. It may be a good short story. It may be one of the charming little poems which appear from time to time. These he should preserve, and the best way of keeping them is to paste them in books, loose-leaf books for preference. Nowadays it is quite easy to buy such books cheaply. A quarto size is very convenient. The books should be numbered or lettered in series, and an index to their contents may be kept in a proper index book. Such a collection of

material, always ready for use, is invaluable, and no teacher of English can afford to dispense with something of the kind.

The teacher's bookshelf, too, should not contain only the books we are in the habit of referring to as "classics". Many children in our schools are led (perhaps unintentionally) to believe that all the writers worth studying are dead. Consequently, they study the classics in school, and out of school leave them severely alone. They read modern writers, but regard them as being completely different from the "classic" authors. The teacher must not forget that children will grow into men and women, reading for the most part contemporary literature. Children should leave school able to distinguish the good from the bad; and with a marked preference for the good. The teacher who ignores modern writers does not adequately prepare children for adult life. Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Marie Corelli owed their popularity to the fact that thousands of readers, who had studied English at school, believed that the one wrote poetry and the other literature! Clearly their English studies had not taught them discrimination or developed taste.

The teacher's library should contain some "dreadful examples". It should contain novels, poems, essays—interesting specimens of all forms of written English. All of it need not be the work of men with famous names. It should be chosen because it is good of its kind, because it is useful, because it can be appreciated by children and is likely to stimulate them to emulation. The teacher should not merely accumulate it: he should know it thoroughly and use it constantly. Some indications of the way in which it may be used will appear later in this book.

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## CHAPTER II

## The Junior School

## The Reading Lesson

The child of eight years of age is nowadays able to read with fair fluency a number of easy texts. Generally speaking, the teacher selecting a reader should be careful to choose one which is not too difficult. The words themselves should not be too hard, and the various topics and narratives should be such that they can be comprehended at the end of one or two readings. We are not here advocating a policy of "softness", but merely pointing out that the matter in a number of school readers is such as to hinder the pupil from learning to read properly. The pupil cannot read with fluency, ease, and just expression if we insist on making him run only obstacle races, nor can he comprehend a chapter as a whole—or even a paragraph—if there is a real difficulty in every sentence.

The reading lesson in the junior school should really be a reading lesson. It should not be given up to talks by the teacher about the subject-matter of the text, or to explanation of words, or to spelling. The aim of the lesson is to read in class a certain portion of reading matter, and to give practice to as many children as possible. The teacher should arrange that this is done, and no temptation should induce him to ignore the fulfilment of this aim.

Nevertheless, something must be done about words that are strange and new. The best plan is to deal with them before the lesson. They are written on the blackboard, preferably in a script which resembles the type used in the reading book. They are pronounced by the whole class, and their meaning indicated; the object of this exercise being that they shall be read without hesitation and understood without difficulty when they are met in the text.

Again, something must be done to ensure that the matter

of the reading lesson has been understood, both in part and as a whole. That is to say, the reading lesson should be followed, after a short interval, by a lesson on oral composition. The two should take place on the same day, whenever possible, but if another lesson is allowed to intervene, there is less likelihood of boredom.

### Composition

The oral composition lesson which follows on the reading lesson should not be an explanation by the teacher. Nor should it consist of brief answers by the children to more or less elaborate questions. The teacher must aim at getting complete statements from the children. "I want you to tell me what we were reading about this morning." "We read about a man who flew in an aeroplane from Croydon to Paris." This is a perfectly satisfactory piece of composition. Contrast this pupil's effort with the following ones:

*Teacher*.—"What were we reading about this morning?"

*Pupil*.—"An aeroplane."

*Teacher*.—"Who was in the aeroplane?"

*Pupil*.—"A man."

*Teacher*.—"Whence did he fly?"

*Pupil*.—"Croydon "; and so on.

This may be a test of what the pupil remembers of what he has read, but it is not an exercise in oral composition. The object of oral composition is to give pupils an opportunity of expressing themselves orally in good English, and this aim must be kept in sight throughout.

Many of the pupils will repeat *verbatim* statements from the reading book. These should be accepted. They are correct English, and as such they fulfil the object of the lesson. It is far more important to be correct than to be original in English; provided the remembered phrase expresses the meaning satisfactorily, there is little point in substituting another for it. It is well, too, that the pupil should accumulate

a store of correct sentences which he may use with confidence on appropriate occasions. He may change these in various ways, to suit other occasions, when he can use them properly—and only then.

A great deal of the written composition proper to the junior stage should aim at the construction of sentences upon approved models. "A man flew in an aeroplane from Croydon to Paris" may be written on the blackboard and copied by the pupils into their books. The teacher erases the words "flew in an aeroplane", "Croydon", and "Paris", and asks the pupils to rewrite the sentence, using other words in place of those rubbed out. One boy will write, perhaps, "A man rode on a donkey from Shoreham to Brighton", and another "A man drove a motor-car from London to Portsmouth", and yet another "A man sailed in a boat from Dover to Hull". Exercises of this kind are based on a sound procedure: it is the sentence, not the word, which is the unit of written and spoken English. The boy is learning to construct sentences after correct models.

As far as possible, the sentences used as models should be taken from the reading lesson. It is true economy to make the utmost use of the reading book, to use it, as far as possible, as the basis of the work in English—so that the composition lesson strengthens the work done in the reading lesson, and vice versa.

Written work must be corrected. There is general agreement on this point. But here the agreement ends. There are many opinions about the questions of how correction should be done and how much of it is necessary. In the first place, if we allow a boy to go on repeating an error time after time, we are allowing him to form a habit. What is wrong must be put right. We ought to guard, as carefully as we can, against allowing a boy to make an error at all. Teachers often provide the very conditions of the commission of errors. If we set a junior a very difficult task—if, say, we ask him to write a story or a piece of composition on a set theme, we



may be sure that his composition will be full of errors—errors of fact, of grammar, of spelling. We correct them all: that is to say, we cross them out, and perhaps, at an immense sacrifice of valuable time, write in red ink what the boy should have written. Is it possible that anyone believes that this is an adequate precaution against the same errors being made again?

If, at first, the written composition is limited, as has been already suggested, to the construction of sentences built upon basic sentences which can be used by the children, sentences which they borrow freely from their reading books, then errors will be few and can be corrected. They will be simple spelling errors, which can be corrected easily, and the child can be set to rewrite his few sentences without mistakes. In this way may be built, gradually but not necessarily slowly, a foundation of correct habit of writing and spelling.

If, on the other hand, we require on occasion a longer effort from the child, a simple "essay" made up of a number of sentences, some precaution against spelling errors should be taken. The essay will ordinarily develop out of oral work in class, and in the oral lesson the words which are likely to prove difficult to spell will be used. They should be written clearly on the blackboard, and should remain there for reference during the written composition lesson. The correction of the written composition should therefore be limited to the marking of grammatical errors. When mistakes in construction are common to the whole class, or to a great many pupils, lessons should be based on them. The incorrect sentence is written on the blackboard and discussed. It is then rubbed out and rewritten correctly, and exercises, of the type already suggested, are given, until the correct form has been thoroughly learned.

The teacher cannot bear in mind too strongly that, especially at the junior stage, it is well to see that as few mistakes as possible are made. At the stage when habits are being formed, we cannot take too great pains to see that the early steps are correct. Prevention is better than cure: it is easier, too.

Taught in this way, spelling, sentence-forming, and the writing of composition will not be found dull. But the resourceful teacher will supplement his teaching with devices which ensure that, in the eyes of the boys, the writing of correct English becomes *worth while*. The regular display of good work on an honours board, the preservation of the exhibited work in a special file which is shown to visitors to the school, and similar devices may be used by a good teacher to stimulate boys to great efforts. Once English work is made *worth while* in the eyes of the boys, they will work eagerly. The mastery of spelling, grammatical construction, and other details which used in the past to be learned only through drudgery, becomes simple, once the boys want to master them.

### Pronunciation

In what has been said up to the present, the junior pupil, the child up to the age of about eleven years, has been looked upon as one to be educated through the imitation of models. This seems sound educationally. A great deal is said nowadays about stages of development, and though there are very wide differences amongst psychologists and educationists as to whether these exist at all, and, if so, regarding their character and their limits, there can be very little doubt that the child of from three to ten, say, learns his world through imitation. This does not mean that he imitates everything. On the contrary, he selects very carefully what he imitates.

His knowledge of English will be based upon imitation of what he hears and what he reads. Teachers must face the fact that the ordinary pupil in the elementary school does not come from a home which is stocked with carefully chosen and good books, nor is the spoken English heard by this pupil that which we would have him imitate: the words are carelessly chosen, they often do not express meaning adequately, they are pronounced in a slovenly way, and put together ungrammatically. The books the pupil sees and reads enter

the home by pure chance, and the majority of them are bought merely to pass away time or to give information.

Ultimately, what the teacher desires—and this applies as much to the senior as to the junior school—is that the pupil shall take the school, and the English of the school-book and the school teacher, as models for imitation, and that he shall reject the English of the home, the playground, and the street. No mere assertion of authority can effect this. The utmost that can be achieved by authority is that the pupil will speak two languages, “school English” at school, and “home English” at home.

Again, no teacher should ever make the fault of trying to undermine the loyalty of the child to his home and his parents, or to his locality. One teacher who objected strongly to the marked provincial speech of her girls, sneered at their “Lancashire accent”, only to be told by the children that they belonged to Lancashire and wanted to “speak Lancashire”. The ill-advised attack merely evoked hostility towards the teacher and the language habits she advocated. Sometimes, too, the teacher who criticizes adversely a certain pronunciation or construction will be told, “That is how my father says it”. I have heard a teacher on such an occasion retort to the child, “Then your father is wrong”. This is distinctly unfair to the child, since he is compelled to choose between his father and his teacher as models. It is likely to be unfortunate for the teacher, since the child resents adverse criticism of his father from another person. We can imagine, too, what will happen at home when the child reports, “Father, my teacher says you don’t speak properly”. It would have been far more tactful if the teacher had laughed and said to the child, “Very well, you tell your father what I said and what you said, and ask him which of the two he would like you to copy”. Fortunately, teachers can generally take for granted that the majority of parents want their children to be better than themselves.

**Use of Phonetics.**—The question often arises as to whether

the teacher should make any use of phonetics in teaching English speech. The use of a phonetic alphabet does not seem practicable in the schools. But nevertheless the teacher will help himself enormously if he knows something about the structures which are common in the production of the sounds of English speech, and the ways in which they are used. The Cockney child is unable to distinguish between "naow" and "now", but can make the latter sound readily enough if he is shown how to use his tongue and lips. The teacher should not merely know, that is to say, the correct sounds of standard speech, but he should understand every detail of the processes by which they are produced. He will thus be able to employ a phonetic method to help his pupils, though he will not teach them phonetics.

Indeed, children seem to like to learn how to use lips and tongue and teeth in the production of sounds; and when this is the case, the teacher should be glad to enlist this interest on his side. The child who could not distinguish at first between "naow" and "now" soon learns to distinguish between them when he realizes how differently they are produced. Once he distinguishes, the use of "now" is likely to become a habit.

## Grammar

A generation ago it was still possible for teachers to speak with conviction of grammar as "the logic of the elementary school", and to believe that the child who received instruction in the subtleties of grammatical distinctions and the complexities of grammatical nomenclature was in some mysterious way trained in "reasoning" and more completely equipped for rational life. Few people would maintain this nowadays, yet nevertheless they feel that the total abandonment of grammar is not wise.

There are to-day, in the schools, some signs of a "back to grammar" movement. This does not mean at present, and may never mean in the future, that we shall return to the type

of grammar teaching which Mr. H. G. Wells so strongly indicted in *Mankind in the Making*. It indicates, rather, that the abandonment of grammar has not brought about all the good results that were prophesied by those who urged this course. When, in the past, it was found that composition received little attention in the schools, and literature practically none at all, reformers claimed that this was because time was devoted to grammar. When it was pointed out that the English work in the schools was formal and stereotyped, lacking in creative character and in originality, the same reformers blamed grammar for exerting a deadening influence upon the English work in the schools.

The teacher will do well to pay a great deal of attention to the reformers. He may even become a disciple, but this will not mean that he ceases to remain a teacher. He will stand apart from those who demand a grammarless curriculum, as well as from those who believe that all human perfection is based on the study of grammar. He will not read into "A Grammarian's Funeral" a theory that grammar was responsible for the high character of the dead man; though he will realize with Browning that any study (*even* grammar, some might say) becomes something worthy when a "high man" gives value to it.

So the teacher will listen to all the wrangling about grammar, and his experience in the classroom will act as the steadying governor or flywheel of the machine. Grammar and spelling do not help originality, but the teacher knows that ignorance of grammar and spelling leads only to originalities which give trouble. He knows, too, that the oftener a child speaks and writes incorrectly, the more certainly is he forming habits of bad English. The whole theory of habit formation makes us realize that the prevention of bad habits and the formation of good ones at an early stage of the child's career is of immense importance. Good habit formation at the early stages is an immense economy of time and labour. We know, too, that it is probably better to form no habits at all than to form bad ones.

Let us realize that a great part of the teaching of English is bound up with the acquirement of good habits of speaking and writing English by the pupil. The main divisions of English studies are—reading, writing, and speaking. In the child's own individual history, speaking comes first, reading as a rule second, and writing third in order. In actual practice, we are compelled to make one of these three studies basic. Which shall it be? The actual conditions of life of the majority of our pupils decide for us that reading is the basic English study. Through reading the pupil will make the acquaintance of good models of English, on which he may base good habits of writing and speech. Consequently, the bulk of early English teaching is directed towards teaching the child to read. Reading is necessarily closely linked to speech: writing stands somewhat apart.

Reading involves the recognition of certain signs for words—certain visual signs, perceived through the medium of the eye. Speech involves the use of certain organs in certain ways, so that the sound of the word is produced, which may be perceived through the medium of a listener's ear. Writing involves the manipulation of a simple tool—brush, pencil, pen, or stylus—by the hand, so that the visual signs for words appear on slate or paper or tablet. For speech or thought the unit is undoubtedly the sentence, the equivalent of the complete thought. For reading, on the other hand, the unit is the word. For writing, the unit is the letter. The early difficulties we experience in teaching are certainly a consequence of the fact that we are trying to do many things at once. If we could confine all our early English studies to oral work, words and letters need not trouble us at all. We could confine our work to the use of correct sentences. All our work would be limited to the sentence, the unit of thought and of conversation.

We cannot do this. We have at least to add reading to our work. Reading is not based upon the sentence, but on the word. The teacher who reflects on this will find that he comes

to regard grammar in the junior school in a new light: it is the necessary link between reading and speech, since it deals with the word in relation to the sentence. Grammar, rightly considered and rightly taught, correlates speech—in which the sentence is a unitary whole—with reading, in which the sentence is an aggregate of words.

Here are details of a way in which this correlation may be achieved: Obtain from the printer a number of tough cards, of about the size of a lady's visiting card, in two clear colours: say pink and yellow. On each pink card write in clear script (using a poster pen and "Indian" or "Artist's Black" ink) a noun. On each yellow card write a verb.

Dogs	bark
Cats	mew
Babies	cry
Boys	shout
Men	work

This set of five nouns and five verbs, ten cards in all, may be given to a child. The teacher puts two cards together, and reads, "Babies work". The child at once laughs or says, "That is silly. Babies cannot work." The teacher agrees, and says, "See if you can find a yellow card which tells me what babies do". The child looks through them all, and soon finds "cry". The two cards are now placed side by side, so that they read, "Babies cry". The child now chooses another pink card, reads the word on it (perhaps "Boys"), and then finds a word on a yellow card which makes up a sentence.

The box with its ten cards makes a very interesting game. Enough boxes can be prepared for each member of a small class to have one.<sup>1</sup> By the time that each pupil has worked through fifteen boxes something will have been learned which can serve as the basis of a series of talks.

It is quite possible now for the children to realize that the

<sup>1</sup> In practice, it is well to number the boxes and to number each card on the back, to ensure that the cards are replaced in the boxes to which they belong.

word on the pink card is the name of something, the word which means the thing, and that the word on the yellow card tells us what the thing does or may do. We need the two words together before we can say anything.

As a variant of the previous exercises and an application of what has been learned in this discussion, we may pile upon the table, face downwards, a number of the pink cards and a number of the yellow ones. We allow half the children to draw a pink card and the other half a yellow one each. A holder of a pink card now rises and reads out, "Babies". The child who holds a yellow card saying what babies do now calls out the word on his card, "cry". The two come to the front of the class and stand side by side. The game goes on till as many pink and yellow card holders are mated.

A junior teacher of resource will find a great many developments of this simple game. At a later stage the children may be provided with blank pink and yellow slips on which they will write "naming words" and "telling words", and the game of "mating" will be played with words which they have written themselves. The correlation of writing with reading and speech is thus introduced.

There is no reason why, when children have become familiar with the distinction between "naming words" and "telling words", they should not speak of them as "nouns" and "verbs". "Nouns are 'naming words' and verbs are 'telling words'", is a perfectly satisfactory definition at this stage. But there should be no haste to introduce the technical term, just as there should be no undue fear of it. A technical term may be used, for the sake of brevity and clearness, by one who is familiar with its meaning. When the teacher is perfectly certain that no confusion will be caused by the use of a technical term, he may use it with advantage.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Recently, in an examination of children entering a secondary school, the candidates were asked, "What part of speech is this word?" One asked, "Is it direct or indirect speech?" Another said, "It is a plural part of speech." Very little is gained by speaking of "bad teaching" in such cases. What are the faults of the teaching which leads to such results?



It is quite possible to add to these two kinds of words a third kind—"describing words". Cards of a third colour might be used, with such words as "little", "big", "large", "small", "cruel", "kind", &c., written on them. These may be used in the same way as the other cards were used. Similar games may be played, with the difference that instead of two children we shall now need three to make up our group. Then, too, the teacher may write a list of a dozen "naming words", and equal numbers of "telling words" and "describing words". The children are required to make up sentences, each containing three words, one from each of the columns.

This method of approaching grammar serves, as has already been said, the purpose of correlating reading with speech. But it serves also, no less because it does it implicitly rather than explicitly, to make clear the function of the word in the sentence.

Can this method be further developed to assist in the correction of habits of speech? It can, if the teacher will remember that the inaccuracies he should correct are not a number of possible inaccuracies, but the real ones which children make every day. These vary so much in different parts of the country and even in different parts of the same town that general advice cannot be given. The teacher must be aware of the inaccuracies he has to correct, through systematic observation of the children in the classes. Nevertheless, one fault is so general, and a method of dealing with it arises so naturally out of exercises of the type we have been discussing, that something may be said about it here.

The fault is that of using the singular noun with the plural verb, and vice versa. If in the list of nouns written on the cards or on the blackboard there appear "a baby" and "babies", and in the verbs "cry" and "cries", we have a means of dealing with the tendency to say "babies cries". Thus, from the very beginning, we may make the grammar teaching a means of dealing with and correcting common

errors, and thus an indirect help to the writing and speaking of correct English.

## Spelling

The question of spelling follows naturally from this discussion of grammar. Spelling bridges the gap between the letter and the word, and thus correlates reading exercises with writing exercises. The child should be taught to make a letter which approximates in form to the letter used in the reading book or the reading card, so that he may, without great difficulty, copy words directly from the book or card.<sup>1</sup>

Our aim in teaching spelling is to train the child to write correctly the words he has met with in the course of his reading. He has to write, that is to say, the words he has seen. Yet, in the spelling lessons of the past, the training has emphasized most of all something that was of little importance, namely, the ability of the child to repeat verbally the letters of a word dictated to him. If we desire that he should be able to do this, we may ask it later, but we must not make this requirement the basis of our method of teaching spelling.

We have to correlate the recognition of the word through the eye with the series of hand movements by means of which the word is written. This very fact immediately suggests a method. The child must look at the word, recognizing it for what it is, and must make the movements of writing it, letter by letter. He may, as a proof of his recognition of the word, say it aloud, and he may also, as he writes the letters or pretends to write them, name them. It is well that he should name the word and the separate letters, but the recognition and the movements are the really important things which should be emphasized. In the early stages the movements should be large, as if the child were writing the letters a

<sup>1</sup> This point has not received the attention it deserves. There is a great difference between making letters of script shape and writing these letters in a proper manner, as a craftsman would practise lettering. When script letters *aec* properly formed, the development of joins follows naturally, and the present gap between "script" and "cursive" writing disappears.

foot high on a board placed at arm's length in front of him.

Somewhat later, the child may be required to write words which are dictated to him by the teacher. They should be familiar words, which have already been met in the reading book. The child should be asked to close his eyes, and to pretend that the word is before him. Then he will make the larger movements, saying the letters softly to himself, and will then write them. As time goes on, the various parts of this complex habit will be performed rapidly and with ease. The teacher will dictate easy sentences in place of single words. What is important is to deal with this whole procedure carefully and in detail in the lower school. If this is done, many of the troubles and difficulties of the upper school will disappear.

A few teachers of the older school deplore the passing of the lesson in spelling. Usually a number of words were written on a blackboard and spelt aloud, simultaneously, by the whole class. Subsequently they were dictated as words or as parts of a connected passage. Some older schoolmasters declare that this method gave better results than are given by the modern neglect of spelling. It is impossible to verify the recollections of the past, but there is evidence which suggests that the spelling of the past was less perfect than it is frequently alleged to have been, but it is nevertheless clear that we cannot adequately deal with a subject by ignoring it. Spelling is still a matter of some importance, and the acquirement of correct spelling habits is a matter for all schools. It has been ignored to some extent in the modern school because our older ways of teaching it took up more time than the importance of the subject warranted.

Attempts to teach spelling in the old way without the old expenditure of time which this method demanded were certain to fail. There seems to be a fair measure of agreement that spelling is, on the whole, less good than it used to be, and modern methods are blamed for the difference. The fault does not lie here altogether. The old method was bad, in

more respects than one. The modern methods are faulty, in that they have not broken away from the old sufficiently: they are, it seems to the writer, in all those instances he has been able to observe, no worse than the old, applied with less thoroughness. The result, something less than that achieved in the past, might have been expected.

If the teacher will only realize that spelling is something far more complete and complex than was contemplated in the past, he will have gone far to evolve a method which is economical. All teaching of spelling ought to link up recognition of words, through the eye or the ear, with the reproduction of words, letter by letter, by means of hand movements. The complete spelling act must involve this recognition plus reproduction in a complete whole.

The pupil learns recognition of words through the ear in the oral language lessons, and through the eye in the reading lessons. He learns the art of making letters in the writing lesson. In the spelling lesson he uses *unitedly* what he has learned separately; and spelling, so taught, ceases to be a dull formal exercise, but usefully correlates together writing, reading, and speech in correct written English.

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### CHAPTER III

## Post-primary English

In the elementary school the pupils of Standards V, VI, and VII have generally been looked upon as different from those in the lower standards. The work set them has not merely been harder, but has differed in kind. In the older type of school, these upper standards were those in which, for the first time, some degree of originality was demanded in the work in English.

To-day, the difference between these pupils—the “eleven

plus " children—and others tends to be emphasized even more. They are to be segregated in Central or Senior Schools, of the selective or non-selective type, or in " upper tops ". The new plan is largely the result of the belief that the boy enters, at his tenth or eleventh year, upon a new stage of development, lasting till his fifteenth or sixteenth year.

Some idea of what is meant by the conception of a " stage of development " is really of importance to the teacher, since an understanding of the term is essential to any comprehension of the character of the work of the central school. Unless there is some change in the boy or girl at about the age of eleven, there is no sound reason why a definite break should be made with his earlier education. If, on the other hand, there is a change, the whole policy of the new senior school must depend upon the nature of this change. It may be that the central school may be called upon to depart from the tradition of the past in education: it may be that experience in these schools will merely confirm this tradition. But we must realize, at the very start, that the senior schools are the greatest experiment in education which has been made yet in this country—and the teacher of English will be no less an experimenter than his colleagues. He must be open-minded. He must be a keen observer. He must see clearly the ends at which he is aiming, and must criticize rigorously his own success in working towards those ends. He must be prepared to be inflexibly conservative, or unconventional and heretical, as the new school may demand of him.

Two important experiments have been made in education which have definite reference to this period of the boy's development. One is the experiment of Mr. Caldwell Cook in the Perse School, recorded in *The Play Way*; the other is the working out in the United States under Miss Helen Parkhurst of the Dalton Plan. The suggestion is not made here that either the " Play Way " or the " Dalton Plan " should be blindly followed without any adaptation. But both should be understood. Both throw an extraordinary light

upon the nature of the stage of development of the child during the period of life for which the central school caters.

Mr. Cook's experiments revealed very clearly the capacity of children at this stage of development for self-expression, and suggested methods of ensuring that this capacity was used for self-development. The results obtained by these methods were certainly far superior to those which followed "spoon feeding" teaching. Miss Parkhurst's experiments resulted in a practical classroom method of setting children free to work in their own way, at their own rate, at times preferred by them, within the limits of a contract made between them and the teacher.

Even if the teacher of English in the central school decides that he cannot adopt *in toto* either the "Play Way" or the "Dalton Plan", he may still realize the importance of learning through self-activity. He may with advantage remember that English and the appreciation of English literature cannot be taught, in a sense; and that his most important rôle in the classroom is the unobtrusive setting of the stage for the self-activity of the pupils. This realization will have a profound effect on his conception of the method he is to follow.

### A Scheme of English Teaching

The teacher of English in the senior school should face the situation in which he finds himself, without bias. He is in general, unlike his less fortunate confrère in the secondary school, free from worry about examinations. He has not to think of preparing his students for the entrance examinations of the universities, or of preparing a foundation for the work of an honours degree course. Let him ask himself, then, what might reasonably be expected, in English, of the pupil leaving the senior school at the age of fifteen or sixteen.

In the first place, we might demand that such a young person should be capable of writing a plain, straightforward business letter, or an interesting personal letter. Next, he should be able to write a straightforward account of some

matter that has come under his notice, an event which he has witnessed, and of conveying in writing some indication of his feelings of indignation, joy, or horror.

He should be able to read fluently and with comprehension, and to make verbal or written summaries of what he has read. He should be able to read aloud with fluency, ease, and just expression. He should be capable of appreciation and æsthetic enjoyment of good literature, contemporary and modern. He should know something of the methods of studying literature, and of making use of standard works of reference in connexion with such studies.

These are, broadly speaking, the ends at which the central school will aim. The pupil, at the end of his course, shall be capable of this diversity of achievement. What are we to expect at the beginning of the course? What are the dimensions of the gap to be bridged? As matters stand at present, a great many of the brighter boys will have been weeded out, on the basis of a competitive qualifying examination in arithmetic and English, with perhaps some geography and history, for the secondary schools. Under some authorities, a further examination of a similar type has sorted out the brightest children for the "selective" central school, leaving the remainder to enter the "non-selective" schools.

At first sight this seems distinctly discouraging, but it is so only because the teacher has been taught to regard the achievement of the "bright" pupils as his highest rewards, and because, in general, the methods to which he is accustomed are those which succeed best with bright boys. But he may be assured of reward if he looks upon his work in the right way. The bulk of the boys with whom he has to deal appear not to be bright, simply because nobody has found the method of appealing to them in ways which secure from them a maximum response. Further, a difficulty has been created by their past lack of success: of what use is it to make efforts when they feel sure in advance that they will be badly beaten? To persist in a hopeless struggle is difficult enough when an

end we value highly is in sight, and demands a very high degree of courage. But what we are asking of these boys is that they shall struggle vainly to gain an end which they do not greatly desire.

Here is an actual incident from the classroom. A boy who could not, apparently, write an English sentence or spell any word of five or more letters correctly was directly challenged. "Why don't you want to write good English?"

"I *do* want to," he replied.

"Why?"

"Because, unless I do, I shall not be able to pass the examination."

"What examination?"

"To be a telegraph boy."

"What will come after that?"

"Another examination to be a postman. And I might go on and become an inspector of postmen."

"I see. And now tell me. What exactly do you want to be?"

There was some hesitation. Finally the boy decided upon confidence. "I really want," he said, "to be the driver of an express fire engine. But my mother wants me to be a postman."

Here, then, is an interesting situation. Everything the boy does to improve his English merely helps him to realize his mother's plans for him, and to erect further barriers against the carrying out of his own plans. But it is the kind of situation the teacher of English will constantly encounter. It is often useless to point out to these boys the importance of good English, since many of them live in a world in which good English is of little importance, as far as they can see. It is useless to tell them that good English will help them in life: they will retort, if they are on a sufficiently friendly footing, that the work they intend to do in life will not call for good English. "I'm going to drive a lorry," one boy told his teacher, "and you do not need English to drive a lorry." It is useless to say that people will not understand those who do



not speak good English, for the boy is already understood by his parents and playmates—and, for that matter, by his teacher.

Generally, then, the teacher in the lower forms of the senior school—in the secondary school too—will say little about the ends of learning good English, but will endeavour to make the work interesting and enjoyable. If English can be discovered by the boy to be a sheer joy, he will do it for its own sake, and he will gain, through working at it, things he would never have striven after for themselves alone.

The basis of all successful attempts to make work enjoyable to children must be a knowledge of the facts about children's development and interests. Theories of education too often come from studies and libraries, and are the results of thinking and reading rather than of observing. The teacher will do well not to base his work upon a belief in such widely repeated half-truths as "All children love stories", and the rest, but constantly to check up what he reads and what he hears with what he sees in the classroom.

### Children's Reading

In February, 1929, a report was issued of an investigation into children's reading by two headmasters working in schools at Bridgend and Barry respectively.<sup>1</sup> Further figures were added from Aberystwyth schools. An analysis of the books which senior pupils said they had read and enjoyed shows that with senior boys adventure tales account for nearly one-half of the books mentioned. With senior girls there was not the same preference for adventure, apparently. Fairy tales stood at the head, and next in order (if we exclude "miscellaneous") were "school tales". The teacher who reads these school tales will know very well that they are not stories about work in the classroom, but deal with all kinds of exciting and extravagant adventure. It would take too much

<sup>1</sup> *Books Children Like Best*, by J. Lloyd Jones, Headmaster, Gladstone Road Boys' School, Barry, and E. T. Owen, Headmaster, Penybont Boys' School, Bridgend, with a preface by Dr. George H. Green, University of Wales. Published by the *Welsh Outlook* Press, Newton, Montgomeryshire.

space to discuss this inquiry here, and it is far better that it should be read as it is reported by the investigators. What appears to stand out is that children at the stage of development we are considering like to read about people and about action. They like to read of people who are doing the things they would wish to do themselves; and there can be little doubt that, as they read, they imagine themselves in the place of the people about whom they are reading. The children tell us that they do not care for biographies, but this is because in biographies too much stress is laid on the informative and the didactic element. Many biographers who write for boys have yet to learn that if the boy is interested he will learn, and if he is not interested he will not. It is better to interest a boy in the facts than to print them in heavy type.

Any definite inquiry made amongst children by a sympathetic inquirer will give a number of shocks. Thus a headmistress finds of her senior girls: "They like *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, but are bored by *The Forsaken Merman*, showing that myths, legends, and phantasies do not appeal, but that the stirring narrative does." *The Pied Piper* incites children to read, provided the teacher allows them to read, and does not interrupt with explanations and questions. They read impatiently, moved by the desire to know what happens next, until they reach the end.

Anyone who suggests that books should be read in this way, with as few interruptions as possible—with none at all, for preference—is always told that children should understand what they read. The obvious retort is that the insistence on understanding very often prevents children from reading. It may be true that children will sometimes read and recite with pleasure something which they do not understand, like the little girl who believed that the mention in the hymn of the mother and the "child she bare" was a reference to a "baby bear". The teacher will realize that since his principal aim is to get children to read, to read more and still more, his technique for making them understand what they read *must*

*be something which does not diminish their joy in reading.* This technique can be developed on the basis of a very simple fact in the natural history of the child.

That fact is this. Children enjoy talking about what they have read, almost as much as they enjoy reading, as a general rule. This talking becomes discussion. In the course of discussion a boy will ask: "What was a guilder worth?" The teacher replies to the question, and then another boy says, "How much does that make the reward offered to the piper?" And because the boys want to know, they will work at the answer. Surely this is more fruitful than the ordinary method of delaying the reading whilst a sum is worked on the board, and a class of children, who ought to be paying attention to the figures, are occupying their minds with speculations as to what will happen next in the story. When the reading is resumed, something has been lost—some enthusiasm, some excitement has been quenched by the boredom. All educational investigation goes to prove that information can be most effectively given *when it is wanted*. The middle of a story is not the place where it is generally wanted.

The statement that children do not care for myths, legends, and phantasies is too sweeping. What is true is that the usual methods of telling these do not greatly appeal. *The Forsaken Merman* has little attraction for children because children cannot easily put themselves in the place of the merman. They cannot easily share his feelings. But they can put themselves in the place of William Tell. They can, in measure, put themselves in the place of Pygmalion, the craftsman who made a statue so beautiful, giving it all but life, that he wished it might live and be his companion. The great difficulty in interesting children in the legends of Greece and Rome, in Celtic myths, and the wonderful stories of the Arthurian cycle is that the stories are seldom told in such ways that the heroes and heroines appear to be living men and women.

The teacher in the senior school who has to choose school

reading books might do worse than hand out specimen copies to the boys for comment. He will often find that the series of books—which have everything to recommend them in the way of paper, typography, artistic and literary quality, fail in one respect—they do not interest children. They will be read, not for the pleasure of reading, but merely as part of school lessons.

Away from school, the children will read something else. They will read books which have neither artistic nor literary quality, which are poorly printed on cheap paper, but which happen to interest children. It is unfortunate that the law of libel does not permit a writer to be specific at this point, but compels a certain vagueness. But the characters are alive. They do the very things that the children believe they would enjoy doing, and their exploits are told in ways which make it possible for children to imagine themselves taking part in them.

The teacher should make a point of studying these books. He will find a great deal to deplore. But before he blames, there is something he must consider. He should find out whether children are not contented with the bad because they do not know of the better. Let him seriously consider whether, in some respects, the "bloods" and "horribles" are not better than the bulk of school readers. He will be forced to the conclusion, we believe, that if their writers know nothing or little of literature, they know a great deal about boys and girls.

One teacher, who was convinced on this point, introduced, to a class of boys who frankly admitted that they read nothing but bloods, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*. He read the single episode dealing with the whitewashing of the fence by Tom, and then laid the book down. There were demands for more, and more was promised. Within a few days all the copies in the local libraries had been borrowed, and some boys had acquired second-hand copies or cheap editions. At the end the book was discussed. One boy, regarded as "hopeless"

by most of the teachers who had handled him, said that the end of the book had disappointed him—"At the end it was just like an ordinary 'dreadful'. It was a fine book at the beginning, but it fizzled out." Literary criticism had begun!

The boys wanted to know, next, if there were any more books by Mark Twain in the school. There were none. They were told, however, to try the public libraries, and they did. They did not enjoy the whole of Mark Twain, but they appreciated a great deal. They had learned, from this one experiment, that "real books" could be more interesting than those they were in the habit of buying. They had begun to read critically. They had begun to use the public library. All this was achieved in the course of a few weeks.

They asked next, what other books they might read. The teacher suggested that Shakespeare was worth reading, but perhaps rather too difficult. They wanted to try. *Macbeth* was chosen for the experiment. In at least five cases out of ten, teachers insist on introducing a play of Shakespeare by a talk, in which they give the outline of the story, so that "the children shall understand what they read"; the assumption being that Shakespeare is incapable of speaking for himself! And thus the teacher robs the children of the main incentive they have for reading the play.

What was done was to give boys parts to take, and to begin the reading at once. At the end of a scene, when a halt was made, there was a cross-fire of questions. "There are notes at the end," said the teacher. "If the thing is explained in the book, there is no need to ask me." The boys began to turn up the notes, but there were still a good many things to ask. The reading went on from day to day, till the play was finished. At the end one boy said, "That was a jolly fine murder story". We cannot say how an Oxford or Cambridge examiner would have dealt with such a comment, but it was an interesting one. Here was a boy, perfectly familiar with murder stories, rating Shakespeare's effort highly, not because he has been told that Shakespeare was England's

greatest writer, but because he appreciated his work. The comment was sincere. This is something that cannot be said for the laudations, generally mere paraphrases of the criticisms given in the introduction to school editions, which regularly appear as answers to examination questions.

The most certain sign of real appreciation was the unanimous request that the next book studied should be another Shakespeare play. Five in all were read in the school year. Meanwhile boys were borrowing books from the public libraries and talking to their teacher about them when they had opportunities. Sometimes he had not read the books they had discovered for themselves, but read them on their recommendation. This gave opportunities of comparing notes with the boys about the strength and weakness of the book.

The interest in literature did not stop at reading. The discovery that writing could be good or bad led to a good deal of self-criticism. It was not always necessary to tell a boy that his writing was poor, since he was beginning to discover the fact for himself. This was important in itself. The boy was, in a sense, humbled by the discovery, but he had no doubt about its justice. The writing was wrong, not because his teacher had said so, but really and objectively and incontrovertibly wrong. The boy felt a certain pride that he was a good enough judge of writing to know it. One or two boys asked if they might write the story out roughly, to get it right, before they wrote it finally in the book which was to be examined by the teacher. All this was done willingly and earnestly. The boys were putting a tremendous amount of effort into the task of improvement.

It would be possible to go on at great length, and to speak of the way in which this attitude towards books and reading penetrated the attitudes towards other departments of school life and work. But similar experiments may be made by any teacher. The whole point is that success in English work, real success that goes far beyond passing examinations, depends

entirely upon enlisting the interest of the children. And this, in turn, depends in knowing what their interests are. This knowledge will not come of reading books on educational theory, but of observing carefully what interests the children; watching their play, reading the books they read, and developing theories out of children rather than children out of theories.

The teacher who encourages reading and is successful in getting boys to make use of the public libraries will generally discover that he has a friend and ally in the local librarian. The modern librarian is often enough a man who takes a real pride in his profession, and is anxious to make his library of service to the community. In more than one provincial town a comfortable room is set aside for the use of school children, with tables and chairs, in which boys and girls have free access to the shelves, and where they may sit and read or write. Such a room is a great asset, not only to the library, but also to the schools of the town. It makes possible the doing of homework. We have to realize that many of our children live in small homes, and that the only room in which they are able to work in the evenings is the room in which all the family meets. Adults are talking, a loud speaker is working, younger children are playing. Quiet reading is all but impossible to anyone not trained to almost inhuman concentration. Calm thought is out of the question.

The room in the library helps to solve this very difficult problem of the child who is handicapped in his home. Not merely does he do homework under ideal conditions, but he learns to make use of books of reference, to seek out information for himself. He learns where information is to be obtained. He learns to read lengthy articles in encyclopædias, and to abstract from them just the facts he wants. There is no need to enlarge here on the value of the training a boy receives in this way, nor to demonstrate to teachers that the most valuable thing a boy can learn, whilst at school, is how to make himself independent of teachers. Mr. H. G. Wells

has complained that education is still carried on as if printed books did not exist. It is undoubtedly true that large numbers of boys leave our schools, primary, central, and secondary, without the least idea of how to obtain important information from printed sources.

### The School Library

Some sort of library is a valuable adjunct in the school itself to the work of the teacher of English. But the development of a school library ought not to interfere in any way with the proper use of the public library. Whatever may be done in the schools, the classroom and school libraries can never hope to compete with the public library, nor is it desirable that they should.

What kind of library ought we to develop in the classroom? The answer to this depends upon what we want of the library, and every teacher will reply to the question in his own way. Do we wish pupils to take books home and keep them there for a week, or do we merely wish boys and girls to consult the books whilst they are in school, very much in the way that undergraduates would do in their college library? A dictionary and an atlas, both much more full and detailed than those in class use, should find a place. There should be portfolios of famous pictures, a dictionary of biography, a dictionary of English literature, a general encyclopædia, some volumes of standard poetry, and one or two good anthologies. These, of course, for a reference rather than a lending library. At first sight the expenditure may seem very great, but the way is generally discoverable when the will exists, and schools which have succeeded in purchasing pianos without the help of public money—and there are many such—will remind pessimistic teachers that, despite the “economy” of public authorities, very much can be done. After all, the need of cheap reference books has been largely met by the proprietors of the “Everyman Library”.

It is really inspiring and encouraging to see, in a school



situated in a slum area, attended by children who come to school ragged and often barefooted, the pupils quietly leaving their places during their English lessons to seek in the books on the shelves the information they want. Sometimes they merely consult the books at the shelves, sometimes they take them to their desks for the purpose of making notes. The result is seen in well-constructed stories, whose historical and geographical backgrounds have been worked out from reference books; in essays whose factual material has been similarly gathered; and in the speeches delivered in the class debating society.

### Self-expression

What has been talked about up to the present is the important matter of background. Good English eventually means satisfactory expression in the mother tongue, and this again implies expression of something, and surroundings which encourage and inspire expression. With the surroundings the teacher has everything to do, even if with the "something" existing in the pupil he may appear to have nothing to do directly. But the teacher, observing his pupils closely, will discover that, in some way or other, the pupil is expressing something. It may be in play or mischief, in excited conversation at inappropriate moments, in day-dreaming, or in other activities. It is the place of the English teacher to make expression in English interesting, worthy, and enviable, and so to make the writing of English a substitute for or a supplement of these other forms of expression which the pupil is already using.

The first necessity, then, is that the teacher shall look at the matter in this broad and catholic way. He is something more than an instructor in parsing and analysis, grammar, and the writing of formal composition. The end is far greater than the means, and a proper understanding of the means will come only to those who are aware of the ends. Parsing and analysis are merely, in certain cases, means to the mastery of

English and so to adequate expression. Analysis and grammar may be means to the full appreciation of Shakespeare, though many teachers and examiners have forgotten this, and appear to regard grammatical exercises as an end in themselves.

We should realize that adequate expression is a condition of healthy living, and that consequently a command of English is something more than the mere acquirement of academic learning. The teacher of English who does his work wholeheartedly makes possible fuller life for his pupils by opening up to them wider channels of expression. And when he helps them to the appreciation and enjoyment of literature he enables them to enter into the lives of the great and good, the men and women who have lived fully and well. Only through literature may the children of to-day enter into the full enjoyment of their rightful heritage, communion with the good and great of the English race.

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## CHAPTER IV

# The Writing of English

“Write as you speak” is advice that is still frequently given. Unfortunately, few people speak as they ought to write. Consequently, one of the things which the teacher of English has to do is to select models, and devise ways of so using them that pupils benefit by their study.

These models, more especially at the early stage of instruction in the post-primary school, should be chosen for their simplicity and directness. The words used in them should be common, simple words, and the construction of the sentences should be simple too. The following is an example:

I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing the heat, but nothing appeared. I now thought it possible that the coating of dirt might have something to do with the failure; so I carefully rinsed the parchment by pouring warm water over it, and,

having done this, I placed it in a tin pan, with the skull downward, and put the pan upon a furnace of lighted charcoal. In a few minutes, the pan having become thoroughly heated, I removed the slip, and, to my inexpressible joy, found it spotted, in several places, with what appeared to be figures arranged in lines. Again I placed it in the pan, and suffered it to remain another minute. Upon taking it off, the whole was just as you see it now.<sup>1</sup>

This simple prose might serve as a model for the description of a number of easy operations. The removal of a foreign stamp from an envelope to which it was firmly attached, the mending of a broken cup with china cement, replacing the valve tubing of a cycle tyre—these and a number of other simple operations might be described much in the same way as Poe has described Legrand's attempt to make visible the secret writing on the vellum. The passage should be read through, once, by the teacher; clearly and slowly.

Questions follow. These have been framed to point out to the pupils, more emphatically than could be done by means of statements, the virtues of the passage. What is described in the passage? Probably a number of statements will have to be taken from boys before one is given which exactly describes what is being done. What was done in the first place? The vellum was held to a fire which had been made hotter than it was before. And next? The various steps may be summarized by a word or two with reference to each, written on the blackboard. At the end the class will begin to appreciate the amount of detail contained in the paragraph, and to realize, however imperfectly, the skill required to state so many facts in so brief a statement. This, of course, is a point we wish them to realize—that expression in English calls for skill, which can be gained only through practice.

Probably the best plan to follow here is to ask the boys to write the paragraph for themselves. The notes on the blackboard will remind them of what has to be dealt with. The majority of them will find that they cannot mention the

<sup>1</sup> From *The Gold Bug*, by Edgar Allan Poe.

whole of the various steps of the complete process without using many more words than Poe has employed. Their own partial failure will emphasize once more the skill of the author.

The boys should have the original passage in their books, as near as possible to their own reproduction of it. This will necessitate, as a rule, following the original exercise by dictation. The teacher should read one or two pupils' efforts, and ask for criticism. Little more should be expected at this stage than that one is less clear than the other—that one is more straightforward than the other—that one "reads better".

Other passages of the same type are the following:

As long as I was in danger I scarcely felt the wound I had received; but when the chase was over I began to suffer from it. I had lost my hat in my flight, and the sun scorched my bare head. I felt faint and giddy; but fearful of falling to the ground beyond the reach of assistance, I staggered on as well as I could, and at last gained the level of the valley and then down I sank; and I knew nothing more till I found myself lying upon these mats, and you stooping over me with the calabash of water.<sup>1</sup>

When I had almost got back to railhead I happened to notice a huge serpent stretched out on the grass, warming himself, his skin of old gold and bright green sparkling brilliantly in the sunshine. He appeared to take little notice of me as I cautiously approached, and was probably drowsy and sated with a heavy meal. I shot him through the head as he lay, and the muscular contortions after death throughout his long body gave me a very vivid idea of the tremendous squeezing power possessed by these reptiles. Skinning him was an easy process, but unfortunately his beautiful colouring soon disappeared, the old gold turning to white and the bright green to lustreless black.<sup>2</sup>

I was fishing for salmon in the river Carron in Ross-shire. One rose to the fly, and I struck at it with more vigour than an old and infirm rod could bear, with the result that it broke clean off at the top of the butt. The fish was still hooked, but being unable to use the reel I had little hope of landing it.

<sup>1</sup> From *Typee*, by Herman Melville

<sup>2</sup> From *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, by Lt.-Col. J. H. Patterson.

Fortunately there was a boy beside me to whom I handed the broken butt. Taking the other part of the rod in my left and the line in my right hand, and releasing from the reel a good many yards to meet possible rushes on the part of my captive, I succeeded by careful management and after a considerable time in landing an 8-lb. fish.<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to multiply instances, since the teacher may find passages suitable for such exercises in every good book he reads. They have not been chosen for beauty or elegance, though every piece of straightforward narrative, well constructed, made of rightly chosen words fashioned into sentences of clear meaning, has beauty. Elegance does not come of overloading with adjectives, or of using unusual words unnecessarily, as children readily think.

Simplicity and clearness cannot be too strongly encouraged at all stages of the English course. The teacher must do everything in his power to lead children to admire these qualities: this does not mean that he is to *tell* the children that they are admirable. His pupils will agree with him if he does, and will faithfully say or write on occasion that nothing can be better than simplicity and clearness in the writing of English; but these assertions will not in the least affect what they write. They will remain in the state of the pupil who wrote: "Never use a proposition to end a sentence with."

The teacher should keep his own book of extracts. He will find from time to time in the better newspapers articles whose paragraphs will serve his purpose well, and he should cut them out and preserve them, with perhaps a comment or two on the reason he has for believing that they are worth keeping. One perhaps is kept for its power of evoking a clear picture of the scene it describes: another because it so surely portrays swift action: another because it deals with something in which boys are interested, so that from time to time they are attempting to write or say something which is

<sup>1</sup> From *Memories Grave and Gay*, by Dr. John Kerr.

here better said. He might, too, tell his boys something about his search for models, something about the points he bears in mind when seeking them, and invite co-operation. Before he accepts a cutting for his book from a pupil, he will say: "What made you choose this?"

At least one lesson a week, for the first year, should be given to the work here indicated. In some classes, it may be possible to work with more difficult models than can possibly be the case in others. In many senior and secondary schools the number of pupils in the first year is so great that the first form is divided into two, three, or even four sections; and these are generally so arranged that the best children are in one division and the worst in another. In the "A" division, it may be possible to proceed very rapidly, whilst in the "C" or "D" groups a good deal of repetition will be necessary.

As a general guiding principle, it may be said that extracts which deal with action—with a complete episode of a complete action—prove more simple than do others dealing with pure description or with reflection. But this must not be taken to mean that pupils in the brighter divisions do not need practice in writing accounts of action, as well as description and reflection. It frequently happens that pupils who are able to write ornate accounts of the flowering of primroses or the setting of the sun are completely at a loss when they are asked to describe some simple activity which they are quite capable of performing creditably: ironing a frock, picking up a "ladder" in a silk stocking, making a pudding, constructing a box, or soldering a hole in a kettle.

### Informal Grammar

The question of formal grammar must be discussed in a later section. Here we can speak only of the informal grammar which naturally arises in connexion with these composition exercises. In the first extract given, the opening sentence reads: "I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing

the heat, but nothing happened.” It is clear that three thoughts have fused into one:

- (a) I increased the heat of the fire.  
I held the vellum again to the fire.  
Nothing happened.

As these stand they are apparently of equal importance, and the order in which they have been placed merely indicates the order in which the events occurred.

The analysis here carried out is just as valuable, as analysis, as another performed in connexion with a piece chosen merely to be analysed. It is far more valuable in another way, because we may here show the real service a knowledge of analysis can do us when we are endeavouring to understand more fully a piece of prose whose general excellence we have admitted. We are here performing a task which is very similar to that which a boy performs of his own accord, when he takes a machine to pieces *to find out how it works*, and not merely to set himself an intricate puzzle whose solution is of no benefit to him.

Having taken the sentence to pieces (analysis) we might try the effect of putting the pieces together again (synthesis); but differently. For example:

- (b) Nothing happened, when I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing the heat.

or:

- (c) I increased the heat of the fire, but nothing happened when I held the vellum again to it.

Synthesis has given us two sentences, in addition to the original, which are made up of the same three elements. What are the differences? Surely the differences in the three lie in that in each of them one of the three thoughts has been considered to be of greater importance than the others. In the original “I increased the heat of the fire” is used merely to indicate when “I held the vellum again to the

fire ”; the latter is a principal and the former a subordinate clause. In (c) “ I increased the heat of the fire ” is a principal clause, whilst “ I held the vellum again to the fire ” has become a mere subordinate clause indicating when “ nothing happened ”.

To prevent confusion, the original with (b) and (c) may be written on the blackboard, and the three different elements which enter into them all may be distinguished by using coloured chalks. Say, for example, that “ Nothing happened ” is written in red: “ I held the vellum again to the fire ”, in blue: and “ I increased the heat of the fire ” in yellow. The conjunctions, which form no part of any of these sentences, are written in white. Now, in each case, underline the subordinate clauses with green. The three synthesized sentences are now far more easily compared.

There will probably be no difficulty in deciding that “ I held the vellum again to the fire ” and “ Nothing happened ” are of greater importance than “ I increased the heat of the fire ”; and that we are right in making the last subordinate. It is less easy to decide that either of the first two is more important than the other. It is easy, however, to see that one deals with an event which is the result of the event with which the first deals, and that, *unless there is some very special reason for acting otherwise*, the account of the consequence should follow the account of the cause. Further, any pupil who realizes that this paragraph is part of a story will be able to predict that, though at this point nothing happens, later on the hero will succeed. We therefore stress his failure at this point in order to make his success seem greater when it comes. And hence we do not say “ nothing happened ” in a casual manner, as if it were of no importance, but we put it just where it is more emphasized. This point becomes clear if we read (b), and then the original.

Thus we find that the discussion of a passage, chosen originally for its simplicity, its clearness and directness, leads us directly to grammar and again to the consideration of



points of technique and construction. It may be that at first numbers of pupils will not be able to proceed so far. No matter. It is important that the teacher of English should realize that the apparently simple extracts chosen as models are capable of being used with advanced pupils, and that some of the problems which they raise are by no means simple. Further—and the point is of real importance—none of these problems is raised merely to tax ingenuity: they arise directly out of the attempt to appraise the model rightly, and to understand its excellence.

### Introduction to Original Composition

It must be borne in mind, all the time that models are being used, that they are means to an end—the writing of original composition. A step that may be taken in this direction is the following: The teacher has in his notebook a paragraph dealing with an episode (the extract on page 39, for example). He suggests to the class that they should write a paragraph of about a hundred words, dealing with the shooting of a snake by a man who found it asleep. When the exercise is completed, the model is written down for comparison.

These exercises lead to a number of possible immediate and practical results. The editor of a school magazine is able to fill his pages many times over, as a rule, with ornate and flowery articles on vague and general topics. But he is generally at a loss for brief interest. A glance through the pages of most school magazines will serve to show how badly such paragraphs are written, as a rule. They are stereotyped. They are verbose. The editor has many correspondents who can write paragraphs which begin: "An event of unusual interest occurred in the school at the beginning of the term . . .", but very few who are willing to write: "Mr. Irvine returned from his trip round the world in April, and was welcomed back by the staff and pupils; most of all by the members of his old form." The verbose and stereotyped

work is not more original than the plain, simple, almost severe work—it is merely imitated from worse models!

Another immediate and practical result is the making of a brief, unpretentious speech. The speeches a pupil is likely to be required to make may be regarded as paragraphs, in which he states that he is speaking for his form, that he is expressing gratitude (or regret, as the case may be), and giving briefly his reasons for doing so. That is all. The study of models which has been suggested is an excellent preparation.

The writing of simple stories is an exercise which may follow with advantage the construction of paragraphs on the lines of suitable models. The story introduces something additional to grammatical construction. It introduces the element of dramatic construction. The stories chosen in the first instance for class purposes should be short and simple. But they should have a very definite point. They should be chosen, that is to say, so that they are not too difficult for pupils just beginning the senior course, but they should nevertheless serve to illustrate all that we are trying to teach. This means that a great many excellent stories, complying with one only of these conditions, will have to be set aside.

Some parts of India are so hot all the year round that the natives have never seen or heard of ice.

A gentleman who had lived in India returned to England, bringing an Indian servant with him. One winter morning, the servant came into the house, bringing with him a piece of ice.

"Look, sir," he said. "I found this piece of glass in the fountain."

The gentleman smiled.

"It looks very wet," said he. "You had better put it in front of the kitchen fire."

After a few minutes the Indian came back, looking very worried.

"That is very strange glass, sir," said he. "The more I dry it, the wetter it gets."

For the enjoyment of any story, as a rule, certain information is necessary. If we are told at the beginning that a

story is about a Scotchman and a Jew, we expect to hear something about two very keen men endeavouring to outreach one another in a matter of business. If the story is about an Irishman, we expect its point to lie in a witty answer or a comic situation. These are conventions so generally accepted that it is unnecessary to preface the story with information about the alleged characteristics of Scotchmen, Jews, or Irishmen.

The whole point of the story just told depends upon the fact that the Indian servant had never seen ice. It will be completely lost upon a hearer or reader who knows nothing of the climatic conditions of a great part of India. We tell him just enough to enable him to appreciate the point of the story—and *no more*. This is the purpose of the introduction. Children who have been studying the geography of India could say a great deal more than this about the geography and meteorology of India; but, when writing this story, *they must not*. When an introduction is necessary, it must be as brief as possible.

(1) When spectacles were first invented, they were sometimes advertised as "Helps to Read".

A countryman entered a shop and asked to be fitted with some. Pair after pair was tried on, but in vain. The customer was quite unable to read the pages of the book which was placed before him.

At last the dealer said: "Can you read at all without glasses?"

"No," said the man. "If I could read, do you think that I should buy glasses to make me read?"

(2) Guy, the founder of Guy's hospital, was a miser.

One evening, when he was sitting in darkness beside a very tiny fire, the old woman who kept house for him came in to say that a stranger was asking to see him.

Guy lighted a candle.

"I wanted to see you," said the stranger. "I am very careful with my money, and never waste any. But my friends have told me that you are even more careful than I am, and I have come to you to talk the matter over."

"If we are going to talk," said Guy, "we shall not need the light," and he blew out the candle.

The teacher will find it possible to add very considerably to his store of composition material if he collects a number of stories similar to those given above. He need have no fear of introducing "chestnuts", for many of the stories he has known for many years are still unknown to his pupils and will be enjoyed by them. At this point of the composition course, it will be well to confine the story material to stories which have a definite introduction and a marked climax. Humorous stories will best serve the purpose.

It will be easy, in the course of class discussion, to make clear to the class that the stories can be regarded as being made up of three parts, viz.:

- (a) An *Introduction*, which gives the information enabling a reader or hearer to understand the point of the story immediately he reaches it.
- (b) A *Narration* (or discourse), which presents a series of events, leading up to
- (c) A *Climax*, which can for the present be regarded as the point at which the reader laughs.

### Literary Appreciation

It will be well, at this point, to review what has been achieved. The study of the model paragraph has led pupils to realize that statements may be made well, less well, or badly; and thus has enabled them to appreciate clear and direct statement, and economy of words. The study of a number of stories which they are able to understand and laugh at has been used to enable them to appreciate "literary form"; to realize, that is to say, that a story, to be well written or well told, must be constructed.

If so much can be achieved by simple means—and there is no doubt that it can—no apology is needed for departing, in the plan here laid down, from the course that many writers on the teaching of English advise. No attempt has been made to introduce to the children the work of great authors in any systematic way, and this neglect has been deliberate. The

enjoyment of good literature is a reward which can be gained only at the end of a long training. It matters not at all whether the training be directed or not, provided it be given. Some sort of natural endowment may be necessary, so that it may be some of our pupils will never be able to enjoy good literature fully, just as the colour-blind and the tone-deaf will never fully enjoy colour and music, and as others will never be able to appreciate the subtleties of flavour that delight the gourmet.

It is, perhaps, not wholly satisfactory to endeavour to establish parallels between material things such as tobaccos, liqueurs, wines, and foods, and such things as music and literature. But everybody knows that the tasters of wines and teas, the samplers of cigars, and the men who are in charge of the preparation of delicate foods, are men whose natural discrimination has been trained, and nobody doubts that musical appreciation comes only to those who have undergone a long and careful training. We do not begin the training of the musician with the masterpieces of Scarlatti, Beethoven, Brahms, and Bach, but with simple music, good of its kind, from which the pupil learns the elements of form and composition. Gradually he proceeds to the appreciation of more and more difficult work, finding in it something which he could never have found had he not been prepared. This is precisely parallel to the development of the expert taster of wines and of teas, who is able to detect difference of flavour in two samples which to ordinary persons taste alike.

We shall not in any way hamper the development of pupils by restricting their literary diet to plain fare. What we have to fear is that they may learn to admire the meretricious and the shoddy. The boy who is going to rise to high levels of architectural appreciation will be helped, and not hindered, if he should learn to love the old cottages of the Sussex villages, but his development will suffer a setback if he should be taught to admire the Albert Memorial or the Imperial Hotel. In exactly the same way, people with possibilities of literary appreciation will be helped by contact with simple,

direct English; but considerably harmed should they acquire a liking for anything resembling the work of the late Miss Marie Corelli.

There is something wrong in asking children to appreciate literature before they have acquired the developed capacity necessary for such appreciation. Either it will bore them, or they will not know its goodness even if they like it. A man may like Chambertin, just as he likes the grocer's Burgundy, without being able to distinguish between the two; but we must not therefore class him with the man who really appreciates the excellence of the former. And people who introduce really good literature to children often believe that children appreciate it when the fact is that they like it no more and no less than poor work. That is to say, they do not appreciate it as literature, but because it has some accidental quality which commends it. Thus, in a class which had learned at the same time *Wynken, Blinken, and Nod* and also Walter de la Mare's *Nod the Shepherd*, both poems were undoubtedly enjoyed; yet anyone who argued from this that a real appreciation of literature was shown would have been wrong, because *Wynken, Blinken, and Nod* was much preferred.

The teacher who insists on introducing the work of great writers, which demands developed capacity for its proper appreciation, at too early a stage, will find himself compelled to tasks which would seem strange enough, had not custom made us familiar with them. If a man tells us that he does not appreciate a delicious soup, we do not ask him to analyse it chemically, in the belief that a knowledge of its chemical composition will change his attitude towards it. We do not tell him that it is good for him, and expect that, as he eats it for his health's sake, he will appreciate its flavour. Yet we do exactly this with literature which we feel is not fully appreciated. We compel pupils to turn stately verse into commonplace prose, believing that the glory which was hidden in the beauty of the one will be revealed in the sordidness of the other. We recommend grammatical analysis, as

if one should attempt to appreciate St. Paul's Cathedral by knocking it down and playing with the stones!

The ultimate aim of literary and grammatical exercises is to enable the pupil to do without them. He learns to paraphrase so that in the end he may dispense with paraphrasing, and to analyse so that he may enjoy without analysis. He will paraphrase at the early stage of his English course, and sometimes at the later stages as well, but merely so that he may read Shakespeare, Tomlinson, Conrad, Kipling, and other great writers and enjoy them fully and immediately. He will analyse, not that he may subject great work to analysis, but so that he will immediately appreciate its structure with enjoyment without the need of dissecting it.

Hence, at this early stage of English in the senior school, we shall find our material for study in simple narrative and homely stories. The narrative shall be informing and interesting, and the stories shall be humorous, because these qualities will compel the pupils' attention. These may be paraphrased and parsed and analysed, because at this stage the pupils are beginning to learn a craft, so that later they will do the thing that is "just right", and will admire the work of the men who do it better.

Another caution is necessary regarding the choice of literary material for study and appreciation. The market is flooded with books which are described as "children's books" or "boys' books" or "girls' books": some justly. The prices of these books are sufficient assurance that they are not bought by the children themselves, but by people who buy them as gifts. They are books, that is to say, that adults would like children to like. They are sometimes about very abnormal children, the products of an unusual and not desirable environment, living lives far removed from those of the ordinary healthy boy of the senior or secondary school. The use of boys' and girls' books in school should be carefully watched. Teachers, like other people, can be affected by prejudice; and it is difficult not to believe that children

like what we wish them to like. Prejudice not merely blinds us to facts, but it also prevents us from making proper investigations into the facts. Teachers, after reading a favourite passage of their own to children, ask enthusiastically, "Wasn't that splendid?" and believe that the chorus of "Yes" indicates true appreciation: it may do so, but it cannot be relied upon. Often enough it indicates merely a passing excitement and a wish to please the teacher.

We must remember, lest we deceive ourselves in the present and prepare disillusion in the future, that the child is far more interested in the matter of the story than in the form. Of the things we want him later to appreciate he is hardly aware. Generally, he prefers stories that deal with actions. And here he exhibits tastes which he shares in common with primitive peoples. In both cases the story is a chronicle of events which have happened to the narrator or to persons known to him, directly or indirectly; or it is a chronicle of experiences which he has imagined to happen. In the case of the child and the simple savage, the events are related in strict sequence, and the story comes to an end as the events come to an end.

If we wish to realize the degree of sophistication we demand from children when we try to get them to appreciate some masterpiece of modern story-telling, it is necessary only to get an uneducated man to relate a series of episodes, or to listen to an uneducated woman retailing some occurrence to another. In the first case the man says that first this thing happened, then that, then another, and then still another thing. "I came along the road, and I saw him standing there. So I said to him, 'What are you doing here at this time of day?' And he said, 'I've just had a quarrel with Mr. Egerton, and I've left him for good.' . . ." And so on. In the second case, we have a long record of fragments of conversation. "She said to me, 'I haven't seen you for a long time'. 'No,' said I, 'I've had my time too fully taken up to be out and about much.' So she said to me, 'Perhaps I shall see a little



more of you now'." Exactly the same sort of thing may be seen in the stories told by the Australian aborigines, and recorded by Spenser and Gillen in their works dealing with the life of the tribes. Things are told as they happened, or are alleged to have happened, or as they are remembered. In a sense these stories begin nowhere and they end nowhere.

The boy of ten years of age or so does not object at all to stories of this type. I have before me a boy's composition, an original effort, which is exactly like it. He was asked by his teacher to write an essay dealing with his best friend. He begins: "I have been told to write a composition about my best friend. My best friend is Fred Williams, so I will write about him." He does nothing of the kind. He goes on: "The other afternoon he asked me to come round to his house." Then follows a chronicle of happenings, of the type, "First we did this. Then we did that. Next we did something else." Every teacher of young boys will recognize it.

The modern writer of stories does nothing of this sort. Mr. W. W. Jacobs, it is true, writes stories in which he artfully suggests a story of this type; excusing the form by putting the tale in the mouth of the night watchman. But any sort of examination of the tale will show the skilled craftsmanship which has gone, in the first instance, to its construction; and in the second place, to disguising the skill and suggesting that the story is the plain, straightforward narrative of an uneducated man.

This somewhat long discussion is not a purposeless digression. It is the attempt to make clear beyond confusion that when we introduce the boy to *The Jungle Book* we are not introducing the boy to Kipling. The eleven-year-old boy finds one thing in the book and the man with developed literary appreciation another. The eleven-year-old boy satisfies an eleven-year-old appetite with *The Jungle Book*. At twenty he does not wish to reopen the book. He remembers, more or less clearly, exactly what it satisfied, and knows that

this appetite no longer exists in him. But the man with developed literary taste turns to a Kipling volume again and again, experiencing again an old delight, or finding something beyond what he had before discovered. The premature use of classics in the schools, it is to be feared, often prevents them from being read later, when they might be appreciated.

We have already led the boy a considerable distance when we have enabled him to see that a story should not be a mere narrative of a sequence of events, but that it should have structure and form. We have gone a long way, too, when we have made him see that the story is not something that can begin anywhere and end anywhere; but that it should have an end (or climax) and that each part of the narrative leads to this and is necessary to it. We may illustrate the point to the pupil by comparing the story to the Nelson column. The statue of Nelson resembles the climax and the plinth the introduction: between the two are interposed a number of stones, each one necessary to the stone superposed upon it and to the column as a whole. And all of them together are necessary to keep the statue in its commanding position.

What has been learned about form prepares the pupil for two further forms of English activity; one written, and the other oral. The former is what is generally, in school, spoken of as the essay: the second is the debating speech.

### The Essay

The object of the essay is to narrate a number of events which can be presented under a single heading, or a series of facts which can be grouped together as a single topic. The first task is the collection of material. The second is its arrangement. The third is the writing.

It is largely by means of the "essay" that English is brought closely into touch with other subjects of instruction. The subject-matter of lessons in chemistry, physics, biology, geography, and even mathematics can be drawn upon for

essay topics. Again, the teachers of these subjects will welcome the assistance of the teacher of English, since the writing of formal compositions on topics connected with lessons will compel pupils to orderly reviews of what has been learned; and, yet again, will prepare pupils for the making of the written statements by which their knowledge will from time to time be tested. Here is a short list of essay topics, all of which refer to matters taught by various subject teachers; usefully revising the pupil's knowledge of the subject, calling for ordered thinking on his part, and training him in the art of giving evidence of the knowledge he possesses.

The Causes of Rain; The Alps; How to Reach the Continent; The Port of Southampton; The Thames; The Life of an Insect; Coniferous Trees; The Rabbit; How the Romans wrote Numbers; Printing; The Feudal System; A Norman Castle; The Chemical Laboratory; The Carpenter's Shop; How we get our Coal; The Cotton Trade of Lancashire; How Steel is Made; The Mediterranean Sea; Tides; A Bunsen Burner.

This list is merely suggestive. The teacher will be able to compile for himself a far better one as a result of finding out some of the topics which his colleagues are dealing with in the lessons they are giving his form. The topics in the list may not appear very inspiring to read through. But the circumstances may easily make them so. The teacher of English is not the person who has been dealing in class with the Bunsen burner; with the result that the pupils will tell him what they have learnt about it with much greater zest than they would talk to the teacher of physics on the same subject. They are, to all appearance, in the position of people giving information to an inferior person; and not in the place of those who are being tested by someone who knows far more than they do.

The first step in the preparation of the essay is, then, an excellent exercise in oral composition. The teacher has discovered, in the staff common room, that his form has

been studying the construction of the Bunsen burner. They have handled it, taken it to pieces, made sketches of it, and have experimented with it in an elementary way. He may say to the form, then: "I hear that you have been studying the Bunsen burner with Mr. Hudson. Tell me what you know about it." Information will readily be given. The teacher will, of course, insist that the answers shall be complete statements. He may take several. Which of them is to be regarded as the first in order? And why?

For some of the children, at least, the first fact to be mentioned is the most outstanding and striking one. It may be that one of the children has been deeply impressed by the experiment of introducing a tube into the "dark cone" of the flame and applying a lighted match to the other end, to demonstrate that the dark cone is made up of unburnt gas. This child, as soon as he is asked to give information about the Bunsen burner, will speak of this experiment. Another will want to talk of the existence of the zones within the flame; and yet another of the way in which the flame is controlled and regulated.

Where shall we begin? Here we meet again with the problem of form, which we encountered when we were dealing with the telling of stories. We shall meet it again when we are dealing with the presentation of topics of less concrete character than those under discussion at the moment. It is easier here than it will be there, simply because the facts themselves impose some kind of discipline on the writer. The child who wants to speak of the structure of the dark cone can be told—"Surely it is not time to speak of this yet. You have not told me what the dark cone is." Simple considerations of this kind, apart from any of a purely literary nature, decide the point at which the essay must begin.

This should be, obviously, a general description of the burner; a statement containing the information that the Bunsen burner is a gas-burner capable of giving a great deal of heat, easily regulated, and invented by the German scientist

Bunsen, nearly a century ago. This information will be given in fragmentary fashion, and to the total collected by the teacher many pupils will, in all probability, contribute.

It is possible to give to the mass of information volunteered by pupils at this point a general title of a descriptive nature. The exercise involved in doing this is of far greater value than that which is demanded by the effort to give a title to a story or a picture. It calls for the use of no words of double meaning.<sup>1</sup> It is an approach to *précis* writing. It is a test of the pupils' apprehension of the relation of the facts to the topic as a whole. The general title should be written on the blackboard, with the figure 1 before it. 1. *Description of the Bunsen Burner.*

Before going on to a further collection of facts, the pupils should be set the task of writing a paragraph which is a "description of the Bunsen burner". Here is a direct application of the work done earlier in the course. When sufficient time has been allowed for this exercise, two or three of the paragraphs may be read aloud. This will serve as a convenient recapitulation of the earlier part of the lesson.

What is to come next? Discussion will follow the lines already laid down. In all probability, the decision will be that the second paragraph will deal with the details of construction. Eventually, the outline on the blackboard will take some such form as the following:

#### THE BUNSEN BURNER

1. Description of the Bunsen burner.
2. Construction and parts of the burner.
3. Account of the way in which the burner works.
4. Experiments with the flame, and what they prove.
5. The use of the Bunsen burner.

Whether the paragraphs are written one by one, or whether

<sup>1</sup> Such, for example, as "Twilight" as the title of a picture showing a bent old woman walking along a country lane after sunset; in which "Twilight" describes not merely the end of the day, but the last phase of the life of the woman.

the teacher, having assured himself by the way in which the first paragraph has been written that the class understands the relation of the headings on the board to the complete paragraphs, proceeds to the completion of the outline and then asks the class to complete the essay, will depend upon the teacher's estimate of the capacity of the class.

Paragraphing is a matter of great importance, and one which pupils ordinarily find difficult. Many undergraduates in the universities, coming up from the secondary and the public schools, are quite unable to paragraph correctly. It is well, throughout the whole of the senior school period, to insist upon the preparation of an outline of every essay written, and upon the division of the essay into paragraphs, one for each heading of the essay outline—no more, no less.

Further, the teacher should insist upon the "indenting" of paragraphs. The first word of the paragraph should begin, not at the beginning of a line, but from one tenth to one eighth of the length of the line from the end. It is far better to make the indenting excessive than otherwise, since thereby the teacher emphasizes the importance of paragraphing.

As an exercise, related to the lesson in essay preparation and construction, confirming and emphasizing what has been said, the pupils should be required to read a chapter of one of their textbooks, and to find a brief descriptive title for each paragraph. The result will be an outline of the chapter, standing in the same relation to the whole chapter that the pupil's essay outline bears to his completed composition.

Instruction and practice in the writing of essays of this type is doubly related to a very great part of the work done in all subjects. As has already been pointed out, the teacher of English may draw upon the work of his colleagues for topics. They may assist him very considerably, and themselves also, by insisting that the questions they set demanding essays as answers shall be answered by means of developed outlines. The teacher of physics who sets the question, "Describe the structure and working of the Bunsen burner",

should expect an essay as an answer; outlined in the first instance, and paragraphed in agreement with the sections of the outline. Nothing is more fatal to a proper outlook on English studies and their place in life than the prevalent belief that English matters very much in the eyes of the English teacher, and hardly at all in those of anybody else.

### **Pictures and Composition**

Every teacher of English knows the value of pictures, especially as aids to oral and written composition. Junior pupils especially who make little response to any other stimulus, often react to a picture that really interests them and begin to take an active part in the oral composition lesson. The pictures should be selected because they appeal to children of various ages, and not because they are famous pictures by artists of renown. The teacher would do well to gather together examples of the very many types which he finds useful in the course of his work in both the junior and senior school.

### **The Debating Society**

It is as well to discuss the debating speech here, since it is so closely related to essays of the type we have been considering. Senior boys and girls take very readily to debating, particularly if care is taken to choose topics which can be intelligently discussed by them. From the first the proceedings of the debate should be formal, for the pupils will find that ceremonial adds very greatly to the interest of the debate. The actual conduct should be under the control of a pupil as chairman. In effect, the debate will be taken up with two "essays" of about eight minutes' duration, two shorter ones lasting four or five minutes each, and a number of "paragraphs" occupying one or two minutes in delivery. That is to say, about ten pupils will have an opportunity of speaking to a critical audience in the course of the lesson period given up to the debate.

A typical programme will perhaps give more information

about the organization of a debate than a marshalled list of general information. It will be less misleading, too, since schools and pupils vary so greatly that detail is often of little use. Again, it is far better to work out details in accordance with needs.

## AMBLESIDE ROAD SENIOR SCHOOL EMLINGCASTER

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### FORM IIB DEBATING SOCIETY

On Friday, 23rd May, 1930, at 3 p.m.

Mr. John Chadwick will move:

“ THAT HOMEWORK OUGHT TO BE ABOLISHED ”

Miss Winnie Mellin will second

The Rejection will be moved by

Miss Nancy Davies

Seconded by Mr. Frank Smith

*In the Chair:*—Miss Lucy Brent

Arthur Potter,  
*Hon. Sec.*

The poster should be the work of the assistant honorary secretary. It should be neat and clear, attractive, and legible. The teacher should insist from the start that school notices must not be written on untidy scraps of paper, illegibly scrawled over, and obviously the work of somebody who believes that notices of debates are not very important. Untidy posters are suggestions to anybody who reads them that the functions they announce are of no importance whatever, whilst a poster that has evidently called for pains and effort is a suggestion that the debate matters a great deal. The honorary secretary should sign the poster himself, thus approving the execution and guaranteeing the accuracy of the information.



The honorary secretary is responsible for announcing the arrangements made, for seeing the people who are to take part in the debate, and for keeping the minutes of the debates and the meetings of the debates committee. At first he will probably need a certain amount of assistance from the form teacher, but he will gradually learn to dispense with this. Pupils, listening at each debate to careful and accurate summaries of the last debate, and comparing them with their own recollections, will receive a valuable training.

There should not be, at first, any rearrangement of the classroom for the purpose of the debate. The chairman should be seated in front of the class, at the centre; preferably behind a table. On either side of him should sit the mover of the resolution and of the rejection, and next them their seconders.

The chairman should be instructed by the teacher in regard to his duties and in the form of words he is to use. He should call formally on the secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting. He should ask the meeting if it is their wish, when the minutes have been read, that they should be signed as a true record of the proceedings of the last meeting, and should ask for an indication, by show of hands, of those in favour or against. This completed, the chairman asks if any member of the society has any further business to bring forward; and, if there is none, calls formally upon the proposer of the motion to speak, using the words: "I call upon Mr. John Chadwick to move the resolution—'That homework ought to be abolished'."

The proposer knows already the time limit to which he is subject. He has prepared his speech—perhaps with the advice and under the supervision of the form master—and now proceeds to deliver it. We do not say that he should never, in any circumstances, be allowed to read the speech; but he should certainly be discouraged from doing so. He should certainly have thought about it, collected material for it, prepared an outline, written the speech carefully, and committed it to memory: this is the ideal course. He may

be permitted to keep before him the very brief outline which is the skeleton of his speech, to refresh his memory and to ensure that the topics of his speech are dealt with in proper sequence. Exactly similar considerations apply to the speech of the seconder. Obviously the proposer and the seconder should be in close touch whilst they are preparing their speeches. They should survey the field they are to cover together, and divide it between them.

The mover of the rejection will have, in measure, to anticipate his opponent's line of argument. He will need to be prepared, as he listens to the opening addresses, to change completely the speech he has prepared, or at least to modify it considerably in part. This means that the mover of the rejection will frequently be required to show more resource, more initiative, and more alertness than the mover of the resolution.

When the four opening speeches have been delivered, the chairman announces that the motion is now before the meeting, and that members may speak when called upon by the chairman. He then calls upon such members of the form as appear to be trying to "catch his eye", allowing them a short but definite time in which to make their remarks.

Presently, when no more members of the class wish to speak, or when the time allotted to the debate has come to an end, he says: "I shall now ask you to vote on the motion before the meeting. The motion is: 'That homework ought to be abolished'. Will those in favour of the motion indicate in the usual way, by raising the right hand?" Hands are raised, and the chairman asks two members of the class to count the numbers. This done, he asks: "Will those against the motion indicate in the usual way, by raising the right hand?" He then announces the figures, and states whether the motion has been accepted or rejected.

The English teacher will realize that the Debating Society is really a formal and dignified setting of oral composition in English. It can be used to give English studies freshness,

interest, and prestige. It stimulates not merely creative activities, but critical activities too; and good work in English, like appreciation, calls for a nice balancing of the two. It is the teacher's business, then, to see that the Debating Society fulfils its object. He must see that membership is regarded as a privilege. He must assist the chairman by advice, indicating to him breaches of order, advising him how to deal with them. He must see, too, that if the chairman has to "name" a member for defiance of the ruling of the chairman, the committee deals with the offender, suspending him from further meetings until they are assured that he may with propriety resume membership. He must back the chairman and the committee, and make them feel that he is backing them. He must make them realize, too, that they are responsible people, though they may always come to him for advice and help.

The teacher who has never experimented in this way with boys and girls has many surprises in store for him. He will be amazed at the competence children of eleven and twelve years of age will show for running societies for themselves. The dignity and firmness of the youthful chairman will come as a surprise. He will be astonished, too, at the variety of topics the pupils ask to discuss. The very fact of liberty of discussion gives pupils a new interest in the world, and these new interests afford possibilities of expression to boys whose lack of real interests had led former teachers to think them possessed of less than the normal complement of intelligence.

Occasionally a political topic will be suggested. But certainly no attempt ought to be made to induce pupils to pay attention to political subjects. Boys and girls are far more aware of the school than of the nation as the community to which they belong, and their real "politics" deal with matters relating to their school life. They will want to discuss the propriety of homework, the powers of prefects, the place of sports and compulsory games, the value of out-of-school

organizations, the worth of certain school subjects, the advantages or disadvantages of mixed schools, and so on. But events in the outer world will stir them to discuss the abolition of capital punishment, disarmament, prohibition, socialism (or even communism), free speech, traffic regulations, and a multitude of other matters. These topics are beyond them, it is true: and most of them, if we will only face it, are beyond us also. Never mind. Let them arrange their thoughts and opinions at this stage. It is the only way in which they can properly prepare to go farther.

The teacher should participate in debates. To withdraw is a mistake, since it can easily be interpreted to mean that he is not greatly interested. He must take part, though, as an ordinary member; carefully observing all the rules of procedure, obeying the chairman's rulings, and speaking only by invitation of the chairman. Other teachers should be invited to attend, but the invitations should be written ones, sent, not from the teacher, but from the committee. On special occasions, speakers might be chosen from outside the class. If there is a motion denouncing the study of French as a waste of time, Miss Evans, who teaches French, might be asked to move its rejection. If the prefects are to be attacked, they might be invited to come and listen, and permitted to speak in their own defence. This outside co-operation from time to time might very well help to remove an air of "provincialism" which often accompanies the development of a strong group spirit.

Occasionally, a joint meeting of two debating societies might be arranged. One form will provide the speakers for the motion; the other those for the rejection. The object of these special meetings is to keep the level of interest high. If it is felt that a debate has fallen a little flat, then something special should be arranged for the following meeting.

Topics for debate should be suggested by members of the class, and should not be imposed by the committee. For this purpose it is a good plan to have a box provided with a slit

into which papers may be dropped, fixed in a prominent position. Pupils should be invited to write topics on pieces of paper, which should be signed, and to drop them in the box for the consideration of the committee.

Committee meetings should be regularly held, and records kept of the attendance of members. It is perhaps a good practice to elect a new committee at the beginning of every term, if only to make the form feel that the committee is representative and to make the members realize that they are responsible to the people who have elected them, and by whose favour they hold office.

Sufficient has probably been said to make the teacher of English, who has never attempted to use the debating society as a means of developing interest in his subject, and a way of increasing its interest for his class and its importance in their eyes, realize that the experiment is worth trying. He must see, from the very start, that he is asking a great deal of children when he asks them to run an organization for themselves. They have the capacity, but it is so rare for them to be given the opportunity that both they and we have ceased to believe that they are able to do anything of the kind. They, on their part, can hardly believe at first that the teacher really intends to leave them free to carry on a society of their own; and watch to see at what point he will interfere. When, however, they realize that they really are free, they assume responsibility readily and seriously. They show themselves impatient of speakers who will not trouble to prepare their speeches well or to deliver them properly, and their criticisms are frank and fearless.

The direct gain to the English teacher is very great. He finds his pupils taking an interest in a wide variety of topics, and relating this interest immediately to correct expression in English. One of his principal aims, that is to say, is achieved directly through the activities of the debating society. Nor need he fear that the benefits will cease with the termination of school life. A boy who has been an active debater and has

learned to appreciate proper forms of discussion is not likely to enjoy or tolerate "arguments" of a lower standard. Whatever occupation the boy may follow in later life, he will benefit from the course in public speaking, as speaker and auditor, which the debating society of the senior school offers him.

One lesson period in each week can profitably be given up to the debating society, or, if this is not practicable, a lesson period per fortnight. It is important that debates should be held regularly, and that proper arrangements should be made beforehand. The art of impromptu speaking may be a desirable one, and well worth cultivating at a later stage; but the whole purpose of the discipline of the debating society is defeated if the children believe that a speech worth making and worth listening to can be invented without thought or preparation. If speeches, why not essays? Why not stories and poems? The capacity for acting without taking thought comes only after long periods of taking thought, in exactly the same way that our easily performed habitual actions follow only upon long practice.

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## CHAPTER V

### Creative Work

Some teachers will have grown impatient with much that has been said in the foregoing pages. So much has been said about writing on such topics as Bunsen burners, the climate of India; and not a word about the splendour of gorse or the grace of willows. Nothing has been said about the beauty of pre-Raphaelite masterpieces. Nothing has been recommended that is likely to turn the pupils' thoughts to loveliness, no incentives to creativeness and originality have been suggested. No means to fine writing has been suggested!

This may or may not be unfortunate. Everything depends upon the teacher's aim. The writer believes very strongly, as a result of his own experience as a teacher and as a reader, that nothing whatever ought to be done to encourage "fine writing". Fine writing is almost invariably dated, and the pupil who pleases a teacher with it to-day will live to amuse his younger contemporaries with it in the future. Few critics would now praise the literary style which made Ruskin famous in Victoria's reign. Sir Thomas Browne and Walter Pater survive only for the few. Simple, sincere, straightforward writing about people, events, and things alone has a universal character, a capacity for appealing to many people at all times. Hazlitt, Borrow, Gilbert White, and John Bunyan—these are some of the people who survive.

So far, we have dealt merely with the means of encouraging children to write simply and sincerely about things they know and understand, about objects and events. We have not spoken of the result as literature, though literature of a humble sort it is. We have suggested ways of encouraging children to describe common things, to say in simple English what they are, what they are like, how they are constructed and how they work. We have demanded that these accounts should be clear and intelligible, so that the people who read them may henceforward possess clear knowledge of the objects and events described, as far as the writers know them. Briefly, we have suggested as an aim to the pupils, the communication of information—clearly, unequivocally, and economically.

If our pupils succeeded in this and went no farther, they would already have outstripped the mass of mankind. Few things are rarer than the capacity to describe things and events simply and clearly, unequivocally and without excess of words. Every business man receives daily numbers of letters whose meaning is not immediately clear, which contain irrelevant matter, which are badly constructed and poorly written. The time of busy editors is wasted cutting out

words which are unnecessary. Comparatively few men and women can write clear and concise directions for the carrying out of a simple process.

It must be remembered, too, that the student of painting who is on the way to become a great creative artist is not on that account to be excused drawing lessons, nor allowed to remain ignorant of the art of mixing colours. Nor is the composer able to dispense with knowledge of notation, or to escape altogether the tyranny of scales and exercises. However great the flights of imagination the pupil may take in the future, if they are to become literature it is essential that he shall be able to write English.

Nevertheless, we cannot afford to ignore that the "expression" of himself calls for more than this writing of what he knows, this recording of facts and reasonings. Perhaps it may be put in this way: "A thrush singing in a garden may be described very much as we have already discussed description. The bird itself, the trees and the garden may be the subject of an essay or the subjects of three. The scene may be recorded by a camera, or the sound by means of a gramophone record. There is, however, something which cannot come to the camera or the gramophone, which comes to the human being who listens. This comes in different measure to different listeners; to some hardly at all, and to others greatly. We may call this "something" rapture, or ecstasy, or delight. We may speak of the state of the person who experiences it as the "poetic state". The objects which are able to induce the poetic state in observers or listeners we speak of as "beautiful".

It is extremely difficult to use words in any definite way in this connexion. Wordsworth's hackneyed lines about "Peter Bell" come to mind at once. But Wordsworth can only be vague about the "something more" that a primrose meant to him than it meant to the man who had said everything when he had said "yellow primrose". Wordsworth does not, however, ridicule Peter Bell because the flower is



a yellow primrose to him; but because, when he has seen all its details and described them, he has dealt with the whole of his experience. Wordsworth had, in greater measure than most men, the capacity for minute observation and exact description, but he had also the capacity for the something more.

It is to be feared that, in many of the schools, teachers who have very little idea of the real significance of literature are engaged in teaching it. A charming poem like Walter de la Mare's *Nod* is something which is to be read in class, and then "explained". This means that de la Mare's delight in clouds has to be ignored, but there has to be talk of the forms and shapes of clouds, and discussion of the origin and occasions of clouds. Poetry vanishes, and agricultural zoology and meteorology is substituted for it. The something more, which is the very stuff of poetry, is completely left out, though everything but the poetry is carefully included. Does anyone really believe that Walter de la Mare wrote *Nod* because he really wanted people to know something about the way sheep were driven by a shepherd, or to know a little more about the facts of country life and rural occupations? What is even worse than such explanation is the belief that, when it has been given to children and duly remembered by them, they have learned to "appreciate" literature! As if one knew Wordsworth through studying the features of Peter Bell!

The very great difficulty encountered here is that anyone who really appreciates literature or any other form of art—sculpture, music, dancing, or painting—cannot explain it to anyone who does not. Colour cannot be explained to the colour-blind, or music to the tone-deaf. Unfortunately, it happens that artistic appreciation is fashionable, so that hundreds of people spend a great deal of time in acquiring what passes with most people for it. They are able to learn a great deal of the history of painting or of literature, the names and biographies of famous writers and artists, details of technique, and other matters which are important aids to

full appreciation, but something different from it. It may and does happen that men and women with a great deal of knowledge of painting, gained through university courses and visits to great art centres, have less true appreciation than an unknown and poor man working in a single wretched room. The former appraise a masterpiece: the latter thrills to it.

Let us take an example, a very simple one. Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*. It is the story of a madman who is moved to fury by the eye of an old man. He waits his opportunity, and kills the old man in his bedroom by smothering him, afterwards concealing the body beneath the floor. When the room is being searched by the police, who are able to find nothing, the murderer betrays himself through his belief that he is able to hear the beating of the old man's heart. This story might have been told in an ordinary newspaper, interested to give the facts of the case and no more. It might have been set out in a textbook of mental disease, which would have given practically the same story; emphasizing, however, quite other details than those of the newspaper. It might have been told, again, in a newspaper specializing in crime stories, where it would have appeared in expanded form, tricked out with an abundance of adjectives—"shocking", "terrible", "blood-curdling", "ghastly", and the rest. Poë cannot dispense with the facts and events, or with the necessity for writing them in clear and careful English. For him, however—and he was one of the few writers who was completely conscious of his aim—the essential thing was to communicate to his readers, not the mere information, but its meaning to him; the terror and the horror and the cruelty.

Exactly the same thing is true of the often quoted *Home Thoughts from Abroad* of Robert Browning. Browning's catalogue of sights and sounds of an English April, as such, is not outside the capacity of a country boy of ten or eleven years of age, familiar enough with chaffinches and orchards. Many people would believe that the pupil has appreciated

the poem when he has translated the words into pictures, and seems to see vividly before his eyes the flowers and the birds of the English countryside, and the bare branches springing into blossom. This, however, is the merest beginning of appreciation. These objects and these pictures have been brought together and described with a purpose in view—the communication to the reader of the experience of exile. Can children appreciate it? Perhaps not. Perhaps the teacher realizes this, and is content that, at the senior school stage, the pupil shall appreciate as far as he is able, leaving full appreciation to the maturer years of after school life. There is no harm in this, provided that the teacher does not allow his class to believe that they have exhausted the significance of the poem; there is, of course, the very real danger that he may unintentionally do so.

We have abundant evidence in the classroom and playground, and in the wider world beyond the school, that children are from time to time profoundly moved by what they see and hear. They talk excitedly to one another, they utter cries of delight, they exclaim, they clap their hands, they jump about on occasion. The sudden sight of something which appears to them to be wonderful moves them, first to silence, and then to cries of “Ah!” and “Oh!” Sometimes, too, they turn to people who are present with remarks which are the raw stuff of poetry. The “Ah!” and “Oh!” mean that the children cannot any longer keep silent, but are moved by deep feeling to *utterance which at the same time expresses and communicates that feeling*. The single word can, of course, communicate the feeling adequately to one who hears the tone in which it is uttered, and is aware of the details of the occasion which calls it forth. But, if these things are made known in the text, then the exclamation can become pure poetry, as, for example, in:

Oh, that with this blossoming plum-branch I could give you  
the song with which this morning it was quivering!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*.

Other instances are:

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there! <sup>1</sup>

And O the spring—the spring!  
I lead the life of a king! <sup>2</sup>

Oh, I am frightened with most hateful thoughts! <sup>3</sup>

See! What is coming from the distance dim!  
A golden Galley all in silken trim! <sup>4</sup>

Here are exclamations expressing a wish, a longing, exultation, fear, and wonder. The first is a perfect little poem, and the others are parts of poems. They are not introduced here with the suggestion that they are all suited to children in the lower forms of senior or secondary schools, but rather to show that the feelings which young children experience—wishes, longings, exultation, fear, and wonder—are the material which, with the help of correct English, can be transmuted into literature. Ordinarily we do not, in school work, pay a great deal of attention to this particular aspect of the child's mental life. We are interested almost exclusively in what he knows and learns and understands. If we excite his wonder, it is merely because he will attend more closely to wonderful than to ordinary things. We permit exultation, and even give occasion for it by congratulation or praise, but merely because in this way we stimulate the pupil to greater efforts of learning. The life of feeling we ignore. The expression of the emotions we do not provide for. And yet this life of inner experience and feeling is the source of all creative effort. It is the aspect of life which is expressed in art and literature; or, failing such means of expression, in all kinds of undesirable ways.

**Daydreams.**—There is no space, in dealing with the writing of English, to speak at any length of the findings of the "new psychology". But writers on the subject, who

<sup>1</sup> Robert Browning, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*.

<sup>2</sup> Keats, *Extracts from an Opera—Daisy's Song*.

• <sup>3</sup> Keats, *ibid.*, *Fragment*.

<sup>4</sup> Keats, *Teignmouth*.

are familiar with the life of the classroom and with the child, have shown how closely related this inner life is to many of the child's apparently spontaneous activities.<sup>1</sup> In dreams and daydreams the child expresses his wishes and aspirations. Dr. Kimmins, like other observers, has noticed how freely and willingly quite young children narrate their dreams. Some teachers, who have asked children to write dreams as composition exercises, have found that the exercise is far superior as English work to the ordinary account of a thing, a person, or an event. This does not mean that we ought to ask children to collect and narrate their dreams, or that we ought to look upon the narration of a dream as a literary achievement. What it means is that there is an aspect of the child's life, ordinarily ignored in the school, but perhaps of as great value as the intellectual aspects of his life, which he wants to express but has few opportunities of expressing. The teacher of English, if he understands this aspect of the child, can help him to expression, and thus give him opportunities of development such as can be offered by few. English literature, as a subject of study and as a means of expression, offers possibilities of development such as are not possible to intellectual and technical studies.

The creative activities of the child are manifested at a very early age in daydreaming. Most teachers know the phenomenon, and speak of it as "mind-wandering", "wool-gathering", or simply as "inattention". They know it merely as a nuisance, and seldom know much about the content of the daydream. Like the dreams of sleep, the daydream ordinarily appears as a scene, with the dreamer in the rôle of actor or spectator. Other people may or may not be present.<sup>2</sup>

The following are a few daydreams of boys and girls of

<sup>1</sup> See the work of Dr. George H. Green, more especially *Psychoanalysis in the Classroom* and *The Daydream* (University of London Press).

<sup>2</sup> This account has been condensed from Green's work, already referred to, with the author's permission. The daydreams are from an unpublished collection.

the age of twelve or thereabouts. They are not in any way extraordinary or unusual:

In my daydreams I am on the stage. It is in the woods and I am a fairy queen. Behind me are three others and they have white dresses on, and round the bottom is a ring of silver tinsel. In each hand they have a silver wand. The wings are spotted with silver. I am dressed nearly the same, but I have a crown of silver, and jewels on it. I am giving a ball to the fairies and brownies. (A girl of twelve.)

In a daydream a little while ago I was thinking I was in the country with some other friends, and after dinner we roamed all round the fields and I was picking flowers. We were wandering all the afternoon, and then came back to the spot from which we started. Just as we were going to begin tea we missed one of the girls and had to go to look for her. We went along and we could not see her anywhere. Then suddenly we heard footsteps and saw her. (A girl of eleven.)

I was living as a rich girl with some good people. Then a person suddenly appeared and asked me to accept the bunch of tea-roses he had brought. This I gladly did. (A girl of twelve.)

I imagined I was in one of the beautiful caves in Derbyshire with my friends. After wandering along some of the corridors I suddenly missed my friends. This did not trouble me very much. I walked along a few more passages leading from the main one. Suddenly a soft pink light attracted my attention, and I made my way towards it. It was a cavern made of crystal of pale shades. It did not have an even floor. Spikes of crystal hung from the ceiling and stood up from the floor. Seated on some of these spikes were queer little elves dressed in soft pale green, while pretty little figures in pale mauve and pink were flitting about. As I watched the scene faded away. (A girl of twelve.)

I am doing good to my country by bold naval actions against the enemy. The action is carried out on a battleship of which my father is the captain. I am rewarded. (A boy of thirteen and a half.)

It would be easy to add to these indefinitely. But these already given will in all probability have served the purpose of convincing the teacher, if he ever doubted it, that he knows the lives and activities of his pupils in part only; and

that there is a whole inner life of thought and feeling which is hidden from him. Hidden, not merely in that he does not know it; but deliberately hidden, inasmuch as he is not permitted to know it. If he wants to reveal it, and utilize it in the service of creative work in English, he will have to be unusually tactful and sympathetic.

The daydreams which have been quoted are those of ordinary children working in elementary schools for the most part. They were collected in the course of an investigation; surprising the teachers a great deal, and the investigator not at all. One teacher's remark is characteristic: she said that she did not know that her pupils were capable of imagining such "nonsense". Valuations of this sort on the part of teachers explain why pupils are reticent about their imaginings, and why creative work in English is rare in our schools. Compared with information about the composition of water or the rivers of China, the products of imagination may be nonsense—yet such nonsense is the stuff of which literature is made. *Endymion* was nonsense to the critics. We may be permitted to wonder exactly how some teachers would have marked *Kubla Khan* had it been sent in by Coleridge as a school exercise.

The daydreams should convince the teacher that the pupils in his classes are already embarked on the tasks which, in the hands of a skilled teacher of English, result in literature. Mr. Caldwell Cook was perfectly right when he insisted that the children who produced verses and prose so excellent that many people were inclined at first to doubt their genuineness were quite ordinary children: what was extraordinary was the opportunity. Exactly the same thing is true of the bulk of "gifted" children. Some observers have pointed out that children who produce work of high artistic quality have no idea how good it is, and this is because such expression is natural to them. They indulge in it when they are small, before they have learned something of adult values of life. They indulge in it with their companions, the few who are

“in the secret”; so that a group of three or four girls in the middle school will write verse which they show to one another, and to no one else. They would not for worlds show it to a teacher.

It should be said here, too, that the basis of any appreciation children will show of the best things in literature will be a sympathetic understanding of the feelings and desires which have prompted the utterance. Such understanding is basic, and without it the meaning of literature cannot be gained, even by encyclopædic knowledge of the shades of meaning of the words employed or meticulous study of grammatical structure.

The very great difficulty in the way of creative work in the schools does not lie in the inability of the children. Creative power, in measure, is possessed by probably all children; but all teachers have not recognized its nature, all teachers are not prepared to welcome its manifestations, and very few teachers have developed a technique for encouraging its expression.

It is hardly possible to suggest sets of exercises which will develop expression of creative tendencies in literary form. The history of genius offers little encouragement to teachers. The “little Latin and less Greek” of Shakespeare is often quoted against schools and schoolmasters, and there is certain internal evidence in the plays to show that Shakespeare loved neither. The real point here, however, is not that schooling is opposed to the development of creative expression in such a way that ignorance of school subjects is a condition of genius (rather stupid magisterial utterances from time to time would suggest that foolish people believe this), but rather that scholarship sets up standards which lead men’s attention away from the very things which poets think important, and occupies their time so much with external facts that they have no time for attention to inner experience. Here is the problem which the English teacher must work out for himself, since apparently no one can advise him.

The attempt to encourage creative activities and expression



will always lead teachers to wonder whether they are not inducing their pupils to pay attention to the wrong things. Parents and colleagues may raise the question as to whether the teacher of English is not deliberately encouraging day-dreaming. On the former point he will perhaps reflect sometimes that no man is likely to make a fortune out of really creative work, whether in literature or in art: he will never be able to justify his work in terms of careers, examinations and bank accounts—but only in his reply to the question “Is not the life more than meat?”

The second point is more serious. The possibility of the existence of such a danger has been suggested by no less eminent an educationist than Sir John Adams. A little reflection on the nature and occasion of the daydream will show, however, that the teacher of creative English is the one person in the school who is least likely to encourage day-dreaming. For daydreaming is evidence of deprivation, and daydreams are expressions of tendencies whose expression is frustrated in ordinary life.<sup>1</sup> The English teacher actually utilizes these daydreaming tendencies, or may do so, and thus develops them usefully beyond the level of futility at which they ordinarily remain.

Suppose, then, we have a teacher of English, with highly developed sensibilities and keen appreciation of good literature and art, possessed of sympathy and tact, and believing that ordinary pupils have creative capacity which only needs direction—suppose we have such a one, what is he to do in the lower forms of senior or secondary school?

Shall he take seriously Stevenson’s “sedulous ape” recommendation? Shall he set his pupils deliberately to imitate the style of this or that author? Those people who suggest to us that this course should be followed forget entirely that Stevenson had an incentive which the school cannot, in the first instance at least, supply. Stevenson had something he

<sup>1</sup> On this point see Dr. Green, *The Daydream* (University of London Press).

wanted to say. He wanted to write. When he had written he found that he had not said what he intended: words were there, sentences too, and a meaning of some kind. The sense of failure and the determination to succeed, drove him to the study of those who had splendidly succeeded. Until our pupils have realized how far their performance falls short of their aim, until they are possessed by the determination to succeed, and until they realize something of the triumph achieved by the masters of literature, the models of style which some writers of textbooks would impose upon them will seem meaningless. The effort to imitate them will result in mere insincere copying. The sincere art student does not copy the masters because he wants to possess copies of masters, but because he wants badly to express something for himself, and is trying to find out how others succeeded where he fails.

We arrive eventually, it appears to us, at the decision that the basis of creative work in English is twofold.

- (a) Creative tendencies in the pupil, which cannot find expression in action but are ordinarily expressed in futile daydreams, may find satisfactory expression in literature and art.
- (b) Creative literature already exists in the mother-tongue. The pupil can appreciate it only because it is an expression of what is in himself demanding expression. With this appreciation of literature may or may not<sup>1</sup> come the urge to express himself in similar ways.

It is this which leads us to the conclusion which must underlie our teaching practice—that creative work in English must begin with appreciation.

<sup>1</sup> May not, because appreciation is itself a form of expression which may, in many cases, be adequate. Many people are able to "enjoy" music, painting, and poetry, without any desire to compose or play, to paint or to write.

### Teaching Practice

We teachers are all, as a result of our work and training, obsessed with the belief that "understanding" is limited to what follows upon "explanation". We fail to understand the child's remark: "I think I could understand, Mother, if you would not explain". No explanations of water such as the chemist and the physicist give us, or of the way in which water affects our senses which the physiologist gives us (though these open new worlds of wonder to us), can help us to appreciate the charm and delight of water as the poets and painters convey it to us: though, if we already appreciate at first, such explanations may add something to our enjoyment through intensifying our wonder. So much is necessary to justify the method of approaching the problem of appreciation here recommended.

Let us begin a lesson by asking children of eleven or twelve to tell us what they can of the life of a sailor. The lesson develops into a conversation, in which many are taking part. Some of the children want to be sailors, believing that as such they might realize many aims which are not fulfilled in their daily lives. They will speak of the excitement, the danger, the risks. They will emphasize the bravery of the sailor. The pupils will talk of the joy of seeing new lands and strange peoples. Some will speak, in their own way, of the delight of being away from streets and houses, in quiet and a solitude broken only by the sight of passing ships. The teacher will take as little part as possible, filling only the rôle of director; accepting an answer here, encouraging there a boy to speak at greater length.

Does the sailor ever tire of this? Does he ever wish to be at home, to see his friends, to lie again in a comfortable bed, to walk in a roomy street? The conversation at this point takes a new turn. Can the sailor ever become sick of the sea? Let us imagine, the teacher suggests, a sailor who has given up the sea, and tried to settle to a life on shore. The

pupils will begin at once to realize something of the regrets and longing which possess a man of this kind. They speak of the things he misses, the things he wants to experience again. The teacher encourages boys to talk, himself contributing to the discussion. When it is at its height he tells them: "You understand, then, how such a man feels. Now listen to this. One of the greatest of our living poets, who was himself a sailor, has written about this very matter."

Then the teacher reads, as perfectly as he is able, Masefield's *Sea Fever*, and the lesson is ended.

This technique gives the poem the place it should occupy in the lesson—the climax. No anti-climax of explanations of words follows, nor the bathos of paraphrase. Later, the teacher may put the book containing the poem on a shelf, and tell the class that the poem is there for them to read for themselves. He should note how many of the pupils, and which, read the poem. It will be a very effective test of his success.

Again, show a picture of Florence or another Italian city. Let it be discussed. Let a composition be written describing the appearance of the town. Most of the children will find in it something that pleases and charms. The assistance of the geography teacher may be asked for, and he may be asked to emphasize, without giving any particular reason for doing so, Italian climatic conditions in April.

The class has now the background of facts which is essential to the lesson the teacher has prepared for them. A brief reference to the picture, the essay, and the geography lessons is all that is necessary to start a discussion on the subject "Living in Italy". Talk of blue skies, fruit trees, dry and sunny days, white houses, leads us on to talk of the life and feelings of an Englishman living in Italy after the short spring has passed. We discover that, interesting as Italy may be, a man who has been brought up in England will miss a great deal. The hard blue sky will appear to him less beautiful than one flecked with moving white clouds. The dull green of olives and cypresses will appear less beautiful

than the fresh green of spring leaves. He will miss the songs of birds. As he looks out on the dry grassless plains and the dusty roads, and feels the sultry heat, he will long for the freshness of an English spring. Then, as the climax of such a discussion as this, the teacher may introduce Robert Browning's *Home Thoughts from Abroad*.

This method of dealing with the poem takes into account the important fact that for proper appreciation a proper mood is necessary. The early part of the lesson, the discussion, is merely a means of evoking the mood in the pupil. Then we present material completely in harmony with the mood. It is essential to choose the right moment, for to read the poem too soon or too late is to make it miss part of its effect. How efficient the preparation has been and how correctly the proper moment has been judged, the teacher may discover for himself by the effect the poem has upon the pupils.

In essentials, this method is that which has been followed by Čizek in Vienna, which has led in his hands to the amazing original drawings from young children whose exhibition startled the teachers of Europe and America. Teachers everywhere refused to believe that these works of art (for many of them were nothing less) were the unaided work of young children, chosen at random from the child population of Vienna. Čizek's method for producing many of these pictures was a discussion of some topic, say "Spring". The teacher may follow the same method.

A day should be chosen when trees are beginning to burst into leaf and bloom. There should be a few bright spring flowers on the table in front of the pupils. The occasion should be a warm, bright morning when the blue of the sky is relieved by drifting flecks of white cloud. "Spring is beginning. Shall we talk about it?" This is a far more appropriate opening than "Tell me what you know about spring", a demand which, on account of its similarity to the customary beginnings of other lessons, suggests that the teacher merely wants a mass of meteorological information.

As the lesson goes on, and one pupil adds to the information given by others, or says flatly that he does not feel about Spring as Dick Jones has said that he feels about it, it becomes clear that there is a mass of available material for discussion which cannot possibly be heard. At this point the teacher says, "If any of you are ready to begin writing now, you may." Why not? In the case of those children who want to begin, the lesson has already achieved its end. These children are already inspired, and if we force them to go on listening, whilst they are bursting to express themselves, we are likely to rob them of their inspiration. Every teacher who has ever worked with a class engaged in creative work knows that it is now or never: moods are not enduring. Every effort of this kind should be followed up by lessons in which pupils are introduced to the work of some great man who has written upon the same topic.

Very obviously, it is of importance that pupils should have access to literature of good quality. We do not want in the schools the pale reflections of literature—the works of masters adapted by people who are merely skilled writers. As a class reader we may use, for the junior classes, a book of good extracts from great literature. The bulk of these should be stories, rather than purely descriptive work. The author's name and the work from which the extract is taken should be given. The extracts should be such as to encourage the children to want to read more, and the teacher should encourage them to make use of their knowledge of the source to borrow the complete work from the local library. In addition, there should be, as has already been pointed out, a number of books to which frequent reference will be made, on the shelves of the form or school library. The works of poets and anthologies of verse should certainly be included.

The great difficulty which the teacher has to face, when he demands creative work from pupils, is this: creative work cannot always be done to order. We do not say that it can never be done to order, for some first-class work has

been done in this way. But though the teacher can reasonably ask a class to let him have an essay on "A Seaport" at the end of a lesson period, he cannot expect to have imaginative work of high quality by a stated time. There are times when imagination seems not to work at all, and others when the pen can hardly keep pace with the thoughts that come like a flood. One of the reasons for distrust of imaginative or creative work in the school is this very fact that imagination is something which does not easily fit into time-tables.

Many such teachers have found an adaptation of the Dalton Plan good. The matter works out in this way. So many lessons per week are at the disposal of the English teacher. Some of these, as few as possible, he will require for class work, for teaching, and for discussions. During the remainder the children should be allowed to work for themselves, at their own rate. They are given a programme, or an "assignment", which should occupy their free English lessons and their homework periods for a fortnight. The total time thus set free may be six or seven hours. Certain English exercises are to be worked, and certain essays written. The remainder of the time is set apart for creative work and for reading.

The free periods, when the pupils are working at the part of the assignment they have chosen, is a great opportunity for the teacher. He is able, at such times, to call pupils to his table, and sitting there with them in low conversation about the work they have handed in, to give them that personal encouragement and approval which makes all the difference in the world to creative work. Children—boys in particular—are extraordinarily shy about their creative thought. They know that if they endeavour to state their feelings about the things of the great world which move them profoundly, they will say something that will not stand the test of common sense. The child who saw a man cranking a car, and cried in ecstasy to his mother, "Mother, that's me winding up that car!" had said something that was very true indeed, though his mother only laughed. The majority of the children

in our schools have been laughed at from the time when they were born, whenever they have ventured to say things that are, in their way, truer than the utterances of common sense. Such statements reach out towards Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*.

But early ridicule has taught the child a lesson, the advisability of wearing a mask; of erecting impenetrable barriers between his feelings and the outer world. The teacher has much to do before the child will pull off the mask or lower the barriers. It is in these free periods that the steps may be taken. One says to the child, "I like that phrase of yours about daffodils." And then, "Tell me what you were doing when that came into your head." The child begins to speak. He may talk in the dullest way about everything else that occurred on that day, or he may, on the other hand, make you realize how much there is in him, which shyness and timidity keep him from putting on paper. In the first instance you must console yourself with the thought that at least *something* happened on that day, and hope that more may happen on another. In the second, you may congratulate yourself on having lowered the barriers a good deal farther, and believe that it will not be long before the difficulty of writing is lessened.

### The Teaching of Poetry

Should poetry be taught? The answer to this is simple and definite. *Poetry cannot be taught*. Verse may, but verse is not necessarily poetry. Do we want to teach verse? The art can be easily acquired. Every textbook of grammar, a few years ago, used to contain a section entitled "prosody", which gave the rules of scansion. If the student cared to read a line of verse in the following fashion:

Oh, LOVE, could YOU and I with FATE CONSPIRE

he realized that the line was made up of five units ("feet"), each consisting of an unaccented followed by an accented



syllable. The pupil learned that there were two kinds of two-syllabled units, and three kinds of three-syllabled units. It was extraordinarily easy to construct verse after such a pattern, and not many years ago every parish clerk in the country was an expert in the art, as the epitaphs in many village churchyards remain to prove.

Children do not like poetry. This statement is frequently made. We ask them—"All who like poetry hold up your hands." Only a few respond, as a rule. We ask why not. Some say at once that they like a story better. Some say they do not understand it. A few, here and there, do not care for rhyme. We turn to those who like poetry, and ask them to tell us some of the poems they like. Often enough the real disappointment lies here: what they like is the merest doggerel—balderdash expressed in tum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum's! It is not poetry at all!

It is just as well not to be discouraged at this point, though a response of this kind (and it is a very common response) seems to confirm the statement that "children do not like poetry". One teacher, dealing with a class of this kind, sketched roughly on the blackboard a horse running, and to the horse's collar he attached a sleigh. The children were interested. They suggested a driver, and people. The teacher added to his sketch, showing roughly a sleigh containing three or four people under a huddle of warm wraps and blankets. The class talked about the snow, dry powdery snow over which the sleigh ran soundlessly through the night—a white road ahead. They spoke of the jollity of riding thus, of gaiety and happiness and laughter. They drew on their imaginations, since none of them had ever ridden in a sleigh, and described the night ride, swift and quiet: not a sound except an occasional peal of laughter, and the tinkling of silver bells.

The teacher changed the conversation suddenly. He told the class that as the sledges passed, with laughter and the tinkling of bells, a man sat in a room with curtains drawn, and heard them. He described very briefly the life of Edgar

Allan Poe, speaking of the death of the poet's mother before he was three years of age, and his adoption by the Allans—the kindly woman and her stern, severe husband. He spoke of the fire which destroyed the Richmond theatre, in which the poet's mother had actually performed at one time, and the loss of life. It was almost certain, he said, that the child, lying in the darkness, had heard the alarm bells and the fire-engines passing, and in all probability the red glare from the fire had lighted his bedroom. He went on to speak of the poet's boyhood and his marriage; his happiness followed by his wife's death.

Now the class took part in the discussion. Here is the man, sitting in his room, unhappy and lonely. He hears the tinkling bells and the laughter. How is he feeling at the moment? What thoughts come to his mind? Immediately the class began to speak of his wishes not to be lonely—his wish that someone were with him—the thoughts of his dead wife. The teacher directed the discussion at this point. Very soon some of the girls suggested that very likely the man's thoughts went back over the life he had lived with his wife—back to his marriage. One suggested that he would think of wedding bells. The sleigh bells are silver. What ought bells to be made of which had brought so much happiness to the man? Almost unanimously the class suggested gold, although all of them knew perfectly well that church bells are not made of gold. But gold is like another metal, suggested the teacher. It is like brass, said a boy—and then a girl breathlessly cried out that brass bells are fire bells, and that this would make him think of the fire at the theatre, when he was a little boy. And then, said a girl, he would think of the death bell. These bells, said the teacher, are made of—gravely and quietly the class said—iron.

The pupils heard without surprise that the man had turned away and had written a poem in four verses, which he called *The Bells*, said the class. None of them had ever heard it or read it. The teacher read the first stanza. He

did not ask if they liked it. There are occasions when such a question is so unnecessary that it is merely annoying. This was one of them.

What has been gained? This. The class has realized, though few of them could possibly have put the realization into words, that the poem is the one way of saying something. Nothing else could have said so much so effectively and finally in so little space. There is a further point which might be mentioned. These children have found out something of the reason why poetry is written, and that it can only be fully understood through understanding of the poet. The next time they meet the stanza it will speak directly to them.

One child made the comment that the words seemed to make the sound of the bells. What the teacher hoped to get them to realize in the end, through *The Bells* and a number of other poems, is that prose is somewhat like walking; whilst poetry is nearer to running, skipping, dancing, hopping, quick-stepping, or slow marching. One is like the movement of a man who has somewhere to go, and who thinks more of his errand than of his walking. The other is like the movement through which we show our feelings.

The introduction of verse composition should ordinarily follow this series of steps:

- (a) The presentation of poetry for appreciation. The technique of such presentation has already been suggested.
- (b) Occasional reading of poetry already appreciated. Encouragement should be given to pupils to learn this poetry by heart, and to recite it aloud.
- (c) Later, when encouraging pupils to attempt creative work, the teacher may say, "You may write it in verse if you wish".
- (d) Poetry may be read aloud and, if thumped or tapped to, the connexion with "beats" in music will be obvious at once.

Prosody will follow. It should be taught last of all, and never regarded as more than a help to the understanding of the reason why difficulty is found to occur with certain parts of lines. Prosody will show when reconstruction is necessary. The rules of prosody will not enable a pupil to write poetry.<sup>1</sup>

The general rule is clear. Pupils may be encouraged to write verse, but it ought not to be demanded of them if they do not wish to write it.

But, as we have said before, the experiences and feelings of children are the very stuff out of which poetry might be made. There are moments in which the streets are nothing more than the way to school or to the shop; there are others when they lead to none knows where, when adventure waits at every corner, when, as Ben Gilbert Brooks says, "Camelot's in London town". If the boy could only write what the streets are to him in such moods, he would write literature, and perhaps poetry.

It is time to collect together the suggestions which have been made, and to endeavour to arrange the work which has to be done with our senior pupils in tabular form. It is not easy to suggest a general heading for the purpose of distinguishing other work from that which we have designated "creative". We cannot call it non-creative, since creative it is, though not undertaken primarily for this reason; nor can we call it "intellectual", since this will imply that "creative" work is not intellectual. "Utilitarian" will best express its purpose, and is chosen for that reason.

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<sup>1</sup> These rules, as a matter of fact, are so uncertain that there is no general agreement amongst authorities as to what they really are. Differences exist even as to what the "foot" or unit of verse may be.

## CHAPTER VI

The Time-table and the Testing  
of English

In planning the time-table, the teacher should try to preserve a true balance between the two types of work. The utilitarian side must not be neglected, for the child must be a useful member of the community. The creative side must not be neglected, since through it the pupil enters into a larger life.

## UTILITARIAN

Reading with understanding.

Reading to gain information.

Writing to convey information.

## CREATIVE

Reading with appreciation.

Reading to deepen inner experience, and to share the inner experience of great men and women.

Writing to express feeling and appreciation and to communicate experience.

**Reading with Understanding.**—Practically all reading may be included under this heading. But, if we wish to distinguish “reading with understanding” from “reading for information”, we must exclude from this section what we wish to include in the latter. In this section then we shall include stories which we ask children to read. Stories and descriptions will be taken from three main sources: (a) school readers; (b) books in the school library; (c) books in the public library. Work with the school readers will be taken with the teacher, who will thus know exactly what the boy

should understand and will be able, by testing during the lesson and by giving explanations that are called for, to ensure that the work really is understood.

The reading of books in the class or school library will be less under the control of the teacher. He will, however, know what books he has recommended for reading, and will be able to discover, by testing, the extent to which the book has been understood. The reading of books in the public libraries can be controlled only in a general way, and not in detail. Nevertheless, there are ways in which the teacher may make himself acquainted with what is done by the boys, which will be discussed in a later section.

**Reading to gain Information.**—Reading for the purpose of gaining information will be carried out in classes other than the English classes—in connexion with physics, chemistry, geography, algebra, arithmetic, and history. The setting and testing of this work will be done by the teachers of these subjects.

In the English classes the teaching will from time to time require boys to read the informative introductions to works which are being studied, i.e. the life of Dickens when *David Copperfield* or some other novel by Charles Dickens is being read, or the accounts of the time of Julius Cæsar or Macbeth, which are prefaced to editions of the Shakespearean plays. Again, such novels as *Ivanhoe* and *Westward Ho!* and *Here-ward the Wake* contain a great deal of information about the periods in which they were written.

**Writing to convey Information.**—The work to be done in this section may be summarized briefly, since it has been already fully treated:

- (a) The writing of brief paragraphs conveying information known to pupils, such as, for instance, items of class or school news. One of the rewards of good work should be insertion in the school magazine.

- (b) The writing of brief accounts of the "how to make"

type. The work of the laboratory and the handicraft room may be utilized for this purpose.

(c) The writing of descriptions of things seen or learned at home, in the scouts' or guides' clubs, &c.

(d) The writing of letters communicating information.

The work to be done under the subheadings of the section entitled "Creative" may be set out as follows:

**Reading with Appreciation.**—(a) Reading by the teacher of passages chosen for their appeal to the imaginative sympathy of pupils. (b) Reading by the class after the class discussion has evoked the appropriate mood. (c) Reading from anthologies of prose or verse at home. In the case of younger pupils, a suitable preparation may be necessary. But such preparation should be regarded as something to be dispensed with as soon as possible.

**Reading to deepen Inner Experience.**—This implies a more sustained effort than is contemplated in the previous section. It is the purpose of reading the plays of Shakespeare, the essays of Lamb, &c. The boy should be able, in measure, to see the world through the eyes of Lamb, to suffer with Brutus and to triumph with Portia. Obviously, this is possible only with the older boys; though, if the works be carefully chosen, some measure of sharing the inner experience of great men is possible to younger boys. Thus the child who fully appreciates the *Christmas Carol* has entered into Dickens's experiences, and the appreciative reader of *Tom Sawyer* into Mark Twain's.

**Writing to express Feeling and Appreciation.**—This has already been dealt with at length.

## The Testing of English

No scheme of teaching English is complete unless, at the time it is being drawn up, consideration is given to the problem of testing it. The ordinary method is by means of a written examination, and to this ordinary method there are

a great many real objections. Let us consider a few of them.

1. The mark given in the written examinations has seldom any clear and definite meaning. Thus, if the teacher awards the mark "seven" out of a maximum of ten, it means to anyone other than the teacher nothing more than that the boy's effort is a fair one. Why have three marks been lost? Is the answer inadequate or inaccurate? Have the marks been deducted for technical faults—for spelling, poor grammar, or bad writing? Because of this general vagueness of the meaning of the mark, pupils are often grouped together who are really very different in point of attainment. The boy with accurate information but poor style is bracketed with the boy who conveys misinformation in excellent language. The vagueness is increased by the fact that teachers vary a great deal in their standards. One teacher, arguing that a pupil's effort can never be perfect, refuses to award a higher mark than seven, and thus finds himself compelled to rate the work of many pupils at none, one, or two marks. Another, who wants to mark a medium effort at about five or six, is compelled to give full marks to a great number of pupils. In either case, numbers of pupils are grouped together in a misleading fashion.

2. The ordinary test question is an invitation to the pupil to write what is practically an essay upon a given topic. Perhaps we cannot altogether dispense with this type of question, which is indeed a valuable exercise for the pupil. But in view of the obvious shortcomings of a test of this kind, enumerated below, efforts should be made to supplement it.

(a) Obviously, in a single examination, the number of essays written by any single pupil must be few. Consequently we can test only a small portion of the work. (b) The essay form compels the pupil to omit a great deal. Reading his essay, we cannot be certain whether the omissions are the result of lack of time or lack of knowledge, or the fear of making the essay inordinately long. (c) The time taken in marking essays is altogether out of proportion to the in-



formation the teacher receives. Further, the type of error makes any general sort of correction impossible. (d) As a test, the essay is seldom "diagnostic". That is to say, it seldom reveals unequivocally what is wrong with the teaching of English, or suggests obvious methods of improving the English teaching.<sup>1</sup> (e) So much time is taken up by testing by means of essays, that tests can be given only occasionally. Consequently, the teacher is only informed of weaknesses long after they should have been treated. The custom of postponing tests to the end of the term generally puts treatment out of the question.

The case against the ordinary test then, is that, valuable as it may be for the purpose of preparing reports and as a rehearsal of the public examination, it does not meet the teacher's need of a simple means of testing, not merely whether work has been done thoroughly or badly, but the precise nature of the weakness. Consequently, when planning such a test, the teacher must ask himself what it is that he wishes to know.

Suppose, for example, that *The Merchant of Venice* has been read by the pupils. The teacher wishes to know how far the story of the three caskets has been comprehended by the class. He may ask for an essay, which will take some time to write; more, perhaps, than he can spare. Further, the story is so complex, that he will often be baffled to know whether obscurities are the result of failure to comprehend or lack of power of expression. Let him then prepare such a list of questions as the following:

How many caskets are spoken of in the play?

Of what were they made?

<sup>1</sup> Support of this view will be found in the reports issued by examining boards. "The set books were generally ill-prepared." Does this mean that more work is demanded of the teacher, or that the methods of preparing set authors are wrong? Or again, "the general level of expression was poor". Such a comment may justify a high proportion of failures or a low proportion of credits, but it gives no information at all to the teacher of what should be done to improve matters. It does not even indicate at all clearly what is wrong.

Which was the correct one?

Who chose this?

Who arranged that Portia's lovers should choose the caskets?

Did Portia know the right casket?

Who chose the right one?

Which did the Prince of Morocco choose?

What was in it?

Which did the Prince of Aragon choose?

What was in it?

The plan of choosing Portia through the caskets was arranged to prevent . . .

Here are twelve questions. The second requires three answers, but the rest call for one answer only. Further, there can be no doubt as to whether the answer is right or wrong.

Each pupil will have a slip of paper, and will write down the numbers 1-12 at the left-hand edge. The teacher will call out the questions, one by one, and the pupils will write the answer, or, if they do not know it, will draw a short horizontal line. At the end, papers will be exchanged, the teacher will call out the correct answers: every correct reply will receive the mark "1", and every incorrect one or omission the mark "o". The total will be written, initialled, and the papers returned. The teacher will ask those who received a mark for the first question to raise their hands, and will note the number. He will thus discover exactly what parts of the play should be read again. He will set the weaker section of the class to reread the whole.

There remains, however, a point to be tested further; one which can best be tested by means of an essay. How did the plan of Portia's father ensure that only one who really loved her should win her? Here is an essay upon a very definite topic, which may be written at home. Surely the teacher who has used the "quiz" and the essay dealing with a definite point knows far more about the work of his class

than another who has relied solely upon an essay entitled, "The Story of the Caskets".

The teacher should make it a rule to go over carefully every piece of reading set to his class and prepare a quiz of this kind based upon it; whether the reading is for comprehension or for information. The marks should be recorded. They may, at the end of a month or of a term, be reduced to percentages, and made the subject of a report. The marks will mean something to the teacher and to the class. To the boy the mark of 70 per cent will mean, not that his teacher is strict or fussy or "mean about marks", but that the boy himself notices only two-thirds of the things he should notice when he reads. Because the mark does not depend upon the teacher, but is objective and meaningful, it will stimulate the boy to more careful attention. As has been firmly established, careful attention in the first instance is the most important condition of accurate remembering. The boy will read better if he knows that he is going to be tested.

The quiz cannot, obviously, be used in connexion with creative work. This is not, however, an argument against its use in circumstances where it can be used with advantage.

Another interesting test is the completion test of the "missing word" or "missing phrase" type. The teacher may write on the board:

Portia's lovers were required to choose one of \_\_\_\_\_.  
He who chose the right one was to \_\_\_\_\_; but those  
who chose wrongly were to \_\_\_\_\_ at once. Before  
choosing each had to promise that, if he chose wrongly,  
he would never \_\_\_\_\_. Some of the lovers refused to  
\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_.

Each of the blank spaces may be numbered. The pupil will write the numbers on his paper and will indicate, against it, the phrase which should appear in the space. Thus a complete paper would have this appearance:

1. Three caskets.
2. Marry Portia.
3. Depart from Belmont.
4. Ask another woman to marry him.
5. Take the oath.
6. Went away.
7. Choosing a casket.

The wording of the answers may vary slightly from this, but the teacher will have no difficulty in deciding whether an answer is right or wrong. The pupil will be made aware, beyond any possible misunderstanding, of what he knows and what he does not know.

It will be necessary for the teacher, who wishes to compile a completion test of this kind, to read very carefully through the section he has set to his pupils, and to write a complete summary of it. He will then decide exactly what omissions will most thoroughly test the extent to which the class has comprehended what has been read, and gathered information from it.

The same type of testing may be used for discovering and correcting weaknesses in the pupil's vocabulary. Thus, for instance, the teacher is not at all certain that pupils are in the habit of using the correct word for certain descriptions, but believes it likely that the wrong word is used. The test takes the form:

Chocolate almonds are { nice  
beautiful.  
pleasing.

(Cross out all but the best word.)

The teacher will note, as he hears them, words which are used in the wrong sense by children. He will certainly hear misused the following, amongst others: awful, frightful, splendid, good, lovely, beautiful, fine, fair, decent, filthy, foul, horrible, mean, rich, hard, dirty, blight, rot, jolly, rotten,

nice, capital, &c. The context in which these words are used will immediately suggest the exercise. Here is a possible test paper:

1. I think that Jim Walker is a very (nice, capital, good) fellow.
2. Alfred Taylor sent in a (decent, fair, average) geography paper.
3. The story that the newspapers told this morning was (rot, rubbish, inaccurate).
4. It was very (decent, good, generous) of the Mayor to give £100 to the hospital.
5. When I heard that I had failed in the examination I felt (beastly, awful, ashamed).
6. What (rotten, foul, bad) luck!
7. Mr. Overton always sets (horrible, beastly, difficult) questions in his examinations.
8. When Johns was not given a place in the first eleven we all thought it a (beastly, awful, great) shame.
9. It will be a (jolly, lovely, fine) day if the rain keeps off.
10. Sunshine on the sea is a (splendid, lovely, beautiful) sight.

In this exercise the pupil is asked to choose, in all ten instances, the one *best word*, and for the correct choice a mark is given. No other choice is allowed to score.

It has not perhaps been pointed out by other writers that this test is much more than a mere test. The pupil is called upon definitely to reject every form of expression but the best. He definitely scores out expressions that he uses. The actual scoring out makes a far greater impression upon him than does the mere verbal making of a statement.

It will be noticed that the word "beastly" occurs in one instance in company with "awful" and "great", and in another with "horrible" and "difficult". That is to say, the teacher knows, when the test is completed, precisely what difficulties his pupils are encountering in the use of

the word—the exact character of their misunderstanding of it. The teacher will naturally justify to the class his reason for regarding one word as the best, and the others as either wrong or inferior to it. He will find, too, that once he begins to discuss words in this particular way, children will voluntarily suggest to him words which they have difficulty in using, or which they suspect to be wrongly used by others.

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## CHAPTER VII

# Grammar and Philology

### Grammar

The question as to whether grammar shall or shall not be taught in the senior schools has yet to be decided. Undoubtedly some teachers will demand it, whilst others will strongly oppose it. We shall no longer teach it, as has been the case in the majority of schools (and is still the case in a minority), in the hope that the study of formal grammar will directly benefit composition and ensure correct speech. The recommendation of the *Report on the Teaching of English in England* should throughout be borne in mind—"Keep it simple". There should be no set periods for lessons in grammar. From the beginning it should be taken as part of the English work, as part of the study of the language.

Grammar should begin with the recognition of the simple parts of speech and with the analysis of sentences. In the lower forms boys and girls should learn to distinguish nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They should distinguish between adverbs of manner, place, and time. The sentences used should at first be simple sentences, such as the children readily compose for themselves. "I filled my pen with ink"

is an example. The child who knows only nouns and verbs should be asked to underline any noun or verb he can find in the sentence:

I filled my pen with ink.

This sentence is an excellent one for the purpose of introducing the pupil to pronouns. We ask him to write down the name of the person indicated by "I": he writes, of course, his own name. He realizes, too, that "my" stands equally for his own name. Ask him to rewrite the sentence, replacing "I" and "my" by his own name. The sentence becomes "John Brown filled John Brown's pen with ink". What may we say at this stage of "I" and "my"? That they stand for "John Brown". Ask the boy to find another word which may stand for his own name. He will probably suggest "me". We have established, at this point, the important fact that "I", "my", and "me" may be used in place of a noun, which is the name of the person who is speaking. People speak of themselves when they use the words "I", "my", and "me". We may, at this stage, introduce the word "pronoun", giving its derivation, since the derivation explains the meaning so clearly.

Following this, we ask the pupil to read his sentence to a neighbour. We say to this second boy, "John Brown has just told you that he has filled his pen with ink. Tell him what he has done." The boy says to John Brown, "You have filled your pen with ink". This sentence is written by all the boys under the sentence first written, so that the two appear thus:

I        filled   my    pen   with   ink.  
You    filled   your   pen   with   ink.

The teacher now says to the class, "You heard John Brown's statement. Will you tell *me* what he has done?" The reply is written down by the boys. On their papers the three sentences appear:

I      filled   my   pen   with   ink.  
You   filled   your   pen   with   ink.  
He      filled   his   pen   with   ink.

The class is now able to write, as an exercise, the pronouns, which they are able to find in the three sentences:

I, my: you, your: he, his.

If he cares to do so, the teacher may distinguish these pronouns from others at a later stage. In a subsequent lesson, for example, in which pupils see that the noun in the sentence "The tree sheds its leaves in winter" is replaced by "its", they will be able to say that the noun which "its" replaces is a different noun from that for which "I", "my", "you", "your", "he", or "his" can be substituted. For pronouns which may be substituted for the names of people we may give the name "personal pronouns".

Exercises and tests on the lesson may take the form of completion tests. The pupil is told that the blank spaces in the following exercise should be filled by a word which stands for the noun which is underlined:

1. The dog — used to bark every night, has been sold.
2. Is the hat you are wearing the — you bought last week?
3. Charles, put on — boots. I want — to run an errand for me.
4. If you see Tom, tell — — tea is ready and waiting for —.
5. Harry says — has lost the book — father bought for —.
6. Harry has lost the book — his father bought him.
7. All the smoke — you see comes from the factory.  
I wish they could prevent —.



8. Hundreds of men are waiting there. I believe — want work, and there is none for —.
9. Here is the cake you asked for. Take — and eat — while — is fresh.
10. Which chocolates will you have, — or —?

The teacher will notice that these exercises and tests are really much more. The pupil who completes them will have learned, at the end, that many words he knows quite well are pronouns. He will have learned something of their place in the sentence and their functions. And, in reading the sentences, with the emphasis on the noun and its pronoun (secured by the attention called to the noun by the underlining, and to the pronoun by the effort to fill the blank correctly), he will have learned the reason for using the pronoun he knows so well; and will have had placed before him, in exceptionally favourable conditions for attracting his notice, good models of proper usage.

Some difficulty is experienced in dealing with the *preposition*. This can be overcome by introducing the preposition in the prepositional phrase. We begin again with a very simple sentence, such as, for instance, "I will come". "I will come" is a sentence, but it is possible to expand it. What question naturally follows the statement? The class will suggest that this question at once arises: "When will you come?" The teacher asks if the sentence can be so worded that this question is unnecessary. "I will come to-morrow," will certainly be suggested. To-morrow, however, is twenty-four hours long. Is a more precise statement possible? "I will come to-morrow at eight o'clock." "I will come to-morrow after tea." "I will come to-morrow in the afternoon." Discussion will result in the statement that "to-morrow" is a word indicating the *time when* the speaker will come: "at eight o'clock", "after tea", "in the afternoon", are phrases serving the same purpose. "At eight o'clock" may be ignored for the present. But "after tea" and "in the afternoon" are

to be spoken of as phrases showing time when; phrases, that is to say, which do the work of an adverb of time.

The class should now work at such an exercise as the following. They are required to underline the phrases in the following sentences (similar to the phrases just spoken of) and to say what they can of their work.

1. Walk over the bridge and along the road.
2. It is time that you were in bed and between the sheets.
3. After supper you may come into my room.
4. I read in *Robinson Crusoe* that a man may be happy on a lonely island.
5. The birds of the air were a-sighing and a-sobbing.
6. Six boys in this class are good at arithmetic.
7. The man spoke to us in a friendly manner.
8. Speak in a whisper whilst you are in the room.
9. We shall go to London in the spring by motor-car.
10. He spoke in anger.

When the phrases have been underlined, we can discuss their elements. We have a noun (the case in which we have a pronoun substituted for it should not be introduced at this stage) with sometimes an article before it—and we have a third word. Allow class doubly to underline this word. The words underlined will be: over, along, in, between, after, into, in, on, of, in, at, to, in, in, to, in, by, in. These words have a position *in front* of (pre-) a noun. They form an important part of those phrases which sometimes perform the work of an adverb.

Little more than this can be said about the preposition until we are in a position to speak of the inflections of the older forms of the English language, whose disappearance has made the preposition necessary. Pupils in the senior schools will not, as a rule, learn Latin, and will therefore, in general, not meet with an inflected language. The teacher may test and exercise his pupils by giving them completion

tests, in which they will fill in blanks with prepositional phrases indicating time, place, or manner. One sample of such a test is given here:

John Taylor walked home —— (time) —— (place).

It cannot be too strongly urged upon the teacher that he should compile his own tests and exercises. If he feels that some of the existing books of questions are of use to him, he will still find the need of adapting and selecting. The writer of the book has to bear in mind an average class and an average teacher, average lessons, and average results. Consequently, at best, he can only meet the needs of any given teacher approximately, whereas the teacher himself may, with a little trouble and resource, meet them completely.

The golden rule in teaching grammar is: Be simple. Children are not at all interested in the subtleties which used to delight the Victorian grammarians. The abstractions are beyond them for one thing, and for another, they can see no purpose in attempting them. Grammar in the early stages should be as concrete as possible, and for this very reason it is urged here that it be taught through exercises, and related to sentences and paragraphs similar to those which children write. Grammar, too, should be interesting, and for this reason it is suggested that such interesting exercises as completion tests should be freely used.

"Be simple" should be borne in mind in the teaching of analysis, which should go hand-in-hand, as has already been pointed out, with the synthesis required in the construction of sentences (see p. 41). Complexities and niceties should be carefully avoided, more especially in the early stages. Sentences should be chosen which are like those which the children use in their composition exercises, and indeed may be taken from these.

From the first, too, children should realize that analysis and synthesis are definitely related to the writing of English, being really helpful exercises. This does not mean that the

teacher should frequently tell the children that the work they are doing is useful, though it may not seem so. It means rather that the work should be so presented to children that its relation to the writing of English is obvious.

A fault which is common in the teaching of analysis is the premature insistence upon the knowledge of terms. The result is that the exercise appears to the children as concerned only with the correct application of unmeaning labels. Let us ignore terms at first, and concentrate upon the simple fact that sentences are made by fusing together a number of simple sentences in definite ways. We begin by dealing with ordinary sentences of the kind which we may discover in any book or in any pupil's essay, discovering the original simple sentences which have been linked together.

1. "The man who saved the life of a child in Kent Street on Saturday was discovered in Birmingham, where he has his home."

The teacher may show that this sentence is really made up of three simple ones:

- (a) The man was discovered in Birmingham.
- (b) The man saved the life of a child in Kent Street on Saturday.
- (c) The man has his home (in Birmingham).

2. "When Captain Cook left the island, the natives, who loved him greatly, ran down the beach and swam after the ship."

The pupils will not find it difficult to analyse this sentence into the simple sentences which compose it.

Exercises of this kind should be given frequently. It is well not to give up whole lessons to them, but to introduce them into the lessons in which we deal with the writing of sentences and the construction of paragraphs. Their purpose is not merely the acquirement of grammatical knowledge,

but an understanding of the way in which very simple sentences, dealing with a single subject, may be woven together and given unity. The analysis of one or two sentences per week throughout a term is far better than an infrequent lesson entirely given up to analysis. The introduction of this work into the ordinary composition lessons, too, establishes the relation of analysis to the writing of English.

Later, we may pay attention to the converse process of synthesis. The teacher sets out three simple sentences, and asks children to do the very opposite of what they have been doing lately, viz. to fuse the three into a single sentence.

The boys are in the third form.

The boys will begin German.

The boys have made good progress in French.

From these there should be little difficulty in forming the sentence: "The boys who are in the third form will begin German when they have made good progress in French", or "The boys who have made good progress in French will begin German when they are in the third form". What difference of meaning is there between the two sentences?

A later stage is reached when the boys have gained facility in both types of exercise, in analysis and in synthesis. They realize that the sentence, "The boys who are in the third form will begin German when they have made good progress in French", is really an expanded form of the sentence, "The boys will begin German". But which boys? Those *who are in the third form*. Obviously this clause (the term may be introduced arbitrarily, without definition) does the same work as a single word which would describe the boys—such a word, for instance, as good, industrious, &c.—that is to say, the same work as an adjective. Similarly, we arrive at the statement that the clause "when they have made good progress in French" does the work of an adverb of time.

Let us write the main statement made in the sentence:

The boys will begin German.

Now rewrite it, with the addition of a simple adjective describing "boys" and an adverb of time modifying "will begin". We have:

The older boys will begin German soon.

and then:

The boys who	will begin	German	when they have
are in the			made good
third form			progress
			in French.

Setting the exercise out in this way is a useful preliminary to analysis in tabular form. We indicate clearly the relation of the subordinate to the principal clause.

Whether the teacher goes far beyond exercises of this kind should depend upon the extent to which he discovers that work in analysis and synthesis is really assisting work in English; helping boys in the task of understanding clearly what they read, and helping them in the task of expressing their thoughts clearly and economically. The teacher should constantly be on his guard against the temptation to teach grammar for its own sake, or to detach grammar from the general body of English studies.

The temptation is the more dangerous, inasmuch as the teaching of grammar is fairly easy, and its results seem to be very definite. The teacher of English often envies his colleague who is responsible for arithmetic, the apparent definiteness of his work, and the certainty of his results. Solutions of problems are right or wrong, whereas essays are far more difficult to mark. They contain much which, though not definitely wrong, might be improved. And this applies still more to creative work, where the assessment of the performances of individual pupils is all but impossible; and the grading of pupils can never attain any certainty. Hence numbers of teachers and head teachers welcome the

definiteness of grammatical studies, and give them preference over serious English work. With grammar, and the type of exercise given in the so-called "practical" textbooks of English, many teachers feel that they "know exactly where they are". Grammatical exercises and many textbooks of English are "practical" only in that they give pupils a facility in working exercises of the kind provided—a misleading facility, in that it gives teachers and others the impression that the child is acquiring a mastery of English, though it does nothing at all to ensure that the child gains in power to express his thoughts in clear and simple English. The popularity of such books with teachers is shown by the fact that new series of them, for elementary and secondary schools, are frequently issued. If they must be used, they should be used as medicine, and not as food: their place is in the cupboard, from which they should emerge only on occasions of necessity. Even then they should be used sparingly.

### Philology

Many teachers have found it possible to interest children very greatly in the meaning and use of words. Some children are naturally interested in them to a greater extent than others. Most teachers know very well the child who acquires an unusual word and begins at once to introduce it, however inappropriately, into his conversation and written work. If we completely knew and understood why, we should find the basis of a technique, perhaps, of interesting children in words.

This is important, because it leads up to the problem, a serious one from the moral and from the æsthetic point of view, of the reasons why children so often deliberately use objectionable words and prefer vulgar and ungrammatical constructions. If we track these words to their sources, we find that they are associated as a rule with people who are admired by the child. The boy who is not primarily interested

in words may sometimes be interested in them because they can be related by the teacher to people and things in which the boy is interested. For instance, the scouts in a class may be challenged to say what the scouts' motto means. Most of them will translate "Be prepared!" by "Be ready!" But, asks the teacher, why say "prepared" if you mean ready? Dictionaries are consulted, and the meaning of the one word is contrasted with the meaning of the other. Now the teacher may embark on the history of the two words. He will find the example a good one, since he is able to show from it the two main sources of the English language. He can show, too, that words have originated with peoples whose whole mode of life was different from our own and that the word itself has undergone changes of meaning and form as this mode of life has changed. Sometimes, in the course of an explanation of this kind, he may instance such words as "sincere", "tawdry", "trivial", and "alcohol". These words, with their interesting and unexpected histories, will serve to demonstrate to the class without difficulty the remarkable interest which may attach to the study of mere words.

Every day the newspaper will supply the teacher with words for further discussion, and he may set these as an exercise in dictionary searching. The ideal reference dictionary for classroom use should give the derivation of the various words, with examples of their use by standard authors. Very few elementary or central schools are equipped so generously. It is hardly to be expected that a love of the dictionary will be fostered in boys and girls by a book which is a mere compilation of words and definitions. But they are, on the other hand, often greatly interested in the larger type of dictionary, whose illustrations, unexpected information, and instances of usage encourage that browsing which is the mark of the book- or word-lover. The teacher should know what dictionaries of this type the local library possesses; and, once knowing this, he should see that his questions send



pupils to the library and the recommended dictionaries for the answer.

Some teachers may find the child's interest in various types of word-puzzle a great help to him; provided he makes use of it in a systematic way. Random use of a haphazard collection of crosswords is not likely to be of any value. But a boy might be quite well occupied in solving a puzzle which he can complete in half an hour. He is expected to bring to school in the morning not merely the solution, but also a comment on the definitions which have been given as clues. In some puzzles many of these definitions are quite wrong, and children will derive a good deal of pleasure from the task of putting them right.

To some teachers it will seem unorthodox, if not frivolous, to introduce crossword puzzles into the classroom. These criticisms are, however, wide of the mark. These puzzles are able to link the use of words to deep natural interests, and to develop a delight in the words themselves and in their use. If the teacher believes that interest in crosswords is confined to people of poor intellectual development, let him glance at the list of solvers of "Torquemada's" puzzles published week by week in the *Sunday Observer*. He will find, too, that if he embark upon the solution of a "Torquemada" puzzle, he will need as a rule before he completes it, to consult dictionaries, gazetteers, and other works of reference. He is hardly likely to reach the end of his task without learning some new word, new usage of a familiar word, or some interesting new fact.

The real difficulty the teacher finds in the matter of the use of the dictionary is that the pupil will not trouble to look up words unless some kind of compulsion is exerted. Dictionary searching is "too much trouble". Once, however, we are able to establish dictionary searching as a habit, this real difficulty disappears. The use of interesting word games and puzzles—easy in the first instance—is a means of establishing such a habit.

If the teacher decides upon such a course, ways and means can be found. In some schools it will be easy to induce the children to buy a copy of a newspaper, and to solve the crossword puzzle as completely as they are able during the weekend, for discussion on Monday. In other schools, or with younger children, use may be made of paper, ruled in quarter-inch squares, such as is generally supplied to schools. The diagram can be copied on this with little trouble, and the clues written down. Easy puzzles for younger children appear on the children's page of a number of daily newspapers. Children may be encouraged to bring them to school for the teacher's collection.

Attempts of this kind to make words interesting and to make the searching out of their meaning a pleasure, will not exonerate the pupil from the necessity of doing a great deal of hard work. No "play way in education" eliminates the necessity for hard work. On the other hand, play methods, skilfully used, serve to supply a pleasure motive, under whose influence the pupil does far more hard work because he likes it, than he has done in the past through the operation of the incentives of fear, shame, desire for success, and the like. The pupil will still need to know a number of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek roots, prefixes, and affixes, but they will be introduced to him in fresh and interesting ways and in new settings.

Take the following instance: A boy in the class has been sent to the hospital, where he has undergone an operation. The word "operation" itself is an interesting one, which most of the children will know only in its surgical sense. It suggests at once the word "opera", which certainly has nothing to do with the surgeon. Numbers of children will know that, in the local cinematograph theatre, the man who manipulates the projector is spoken of as the "operator". Here, obviously, is a means of introducing the question of "Latin roots".

Or again, the newspaper headlines and posters refer to

an aviator. We link the word "aviator" to "aviation", "aviary". Search in the dictionary gives us a great many more words. The teacher may add some French words, such as "avion". All these words are connected with "flight" or with "birds", and all are ultimately linked to the Latin *avis*.

Systematic work of this kind will sooner or later bring the pupil to the point when he will find an interest in working through and memorizing the tables of roots, prefixes, and affixes, which were at first sight so uninviting. As soon as these tables acquire a meaning and the pupil finds in himself a purpose and a motive, he will work with eagerness.

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## CHAPTER VIII

# English in its Relation to other Subjects

The importance of the work of the English teacher is very clearly shown by the extent to which his colleagues, not teachers of English, depend upon his efforts. The teacher of history, for example, will waste very much of the time which should be devoted to teaching if he has to deal specifically with notes. He can make full use of the time devoted to history only when he is able to assume that the members of his class are capable of writing now and again a brief comment which fairly represents the matter of a considerable section of the lesson or lecture.

Anyone who has lectured to adults, in university or university extension classes, in summer schools or other institutions, has been frequently confronted by the listener who is anxious to copy down every word the lecturer says.

Only seldom can lectures, taken in longhand at the ordinary speaking rate, be read. Again, it is possible to only a few people, or to none, to write a verbatim report and simultaneously think critically—as an auditor should—about what is being said. The teacher who demands that his pupils should write what he says, word for word, in place of thinking of what is being said, has a fundamentally false idea of the work of an educator.

It is very clear to modern teachers—so clear that it seems hardly to be worth stating—that all real education comes only as a result of real effort on the part of the pupil. This effort cannot be made, in history or geography or any other subjects, if the pupil's attention is diverted from the actual subject-matter to the effort to write down all that the teacher is saying.

Very obviously, what is demanded of the pupil by a modern teacher is something very different. At the same time, it is something so complex as to elude definition. Teachers of history and geography are apt to be impatient with their English colleague because his pupils are not able to hand in exercises in their special subjects which are written as they believe they should be written. For this situation there seems but one explanation, which is generally adopted, namely, that the English taught in English lessons is very useful for the purpose of passing examinations in English, but has no relation whatever to the English required in ordinary conversation, in writing personal or business letters, in composing brief announcements, or in taking notes.

But this apparent evasion by the English teacher becomes every day more and more unsatisfactory. The school is changing a great deal, but those who look upon "changing" as synonymous with "floundering" are wrong. Experiments have been made in great number in the past score of years in very many schools, and the general result is that certain broad lines of procedure have been definitely laid down, and are not likely to be departed from for many years to come.

This means that the field of experiment will be shifted. Having determined the general character of the school, experiment will attempt to determine the best kinds of procedure within the school.

We can hardly, however, begin to experiment until we can state to ourselves a definite problem on which to begin work. The attitude of his colleagues towards the teacher of English merely indicates the existence of a problem without defining it clearly. Perhaps it may be stated in the following terms: "It is alleged that boys who satisfy the teacher of English of their capacity to write English during English lesson periods fail to write English during history and geography lesson periods."

It is worth while to spend a good deal of time considering this point, because what applies here applies in a number of school situations. We no longer accept the Herbartian pedagogue's doctrine of "correlation" in the same way in which it was accepted in the nineties, but the insistence on the importance of the specialist teacher no longer blinds us (as it often blinded the educationist of fifteen or twenty years ago) to the truth that knowledge must be one and that all the subjects of the school curriculum are linked together by a bond of interdependence. And this means that specialists cannot remain in a position of splendid isolation, but must work out ways of working together helpfully, for the pupils' benefit and their own.

Staff meetings are helpful, but their usefulness is limited. If the history teacher complains that the English teaching is ineffectual, then he must be prepared to tell the English teacher exactly why he believes this; and the English teacher must be prepared to consider seriously his colleague's charges. This calls for moderation and good sense and breadth of mind on the part of both. In passing, we may note that the complaints of other teachers about their pupils' shortcomings in English are so many admissions that the work of the English teacher matters as much to them as to him.

It will be necessary that the English teacher shall frankly ask his colleagues: "Tell me exactly what work in English you want from your pupils. Show me, or prepare for me, what you consider a satisfactory set of notes of a lesson you have given: if I may see your own outlines of the lesson too, so much the better. Give me a model answer to a question you have set in your subject, and let me see some of the answers with which you are dissatisfied on account of the poor English in which they are written. For it is clear that I cannot understand why you are dissatisfied till I know something of what satisfies you."

Given, in this way, the conditions of the problem, the teacher of English will find himself in a position to formulate it and to attempt its solution. He will realize that the faults are not entirely on his side, nor is the problem something which he must tackle alone. The teacher of history should acquaint himself with the methods and syllabus followed in English, so that his demands may be made with a reasonable hope of their fulfilment. He must realize, too, that he must make the demands. Those who are interested in problems connected with the "transfer of training" will know that children who speak excellent English in school speak vulgar, provincial, and slipshod English in their own homes and in the street, simply because nobody in either demands good English from them. If the teacher of history or geography decides that he and the teacher of English are to "pull together", the one must see that pupils are adequately prepared to express themselves in the way that the other requires; but no less must the other insist that full use is made of this preparation. The benefit of such collaboration to the teachers concerned, as well as to the pupils, is obvious. The history teacher or the geography teacher may now devote his time fully to his subject, whilst the teacher of English may rest assured that the lessons in history and geography are, from his point of view, practice periods for the exercise of the knowledge acquired during English lessons.

He is relieved immediately of a great deal of dull and uninteresting recapitulatory work.

If teachers of other subjects demand that, at a certain stage of their school career, pupils shall be able to make working notes of a lesson during its progress, shall be able to expand these notes into useful summaries of the lesson at home, and shall be able to write accurate, clear, and well-arranged answers to questions based on lessons and on reading, the necessary work in English must be done before pupils reach this stage. Further, if it is to be done by the teacher of English, it must be done as English and not as history or geography or science.

A good deal of this training will consist of exercises in the correct reproduction of the substance of something read or spoken, either immediately after it has been seen or heard, or after the expiration of a short interval. A method, less in use now than some years ago, was the reading by the teacher or by the class of brief anecdotes, humorous as a rule, and the subsequent reproduction by the class. The disadvantage of such material, from the point of view of the teacher of literature, is that the material has little literary value, and may perhaps encourage the pupil to read for the sake of the joke rather than for the sake of literary beauty. Against this we may urge that there are so many good stories that the teacher has no reason for picking bad ones; and that the literary quality of a story depends (as the works of Shakespeare prove) much less upon the story than upon the manner of telling it. The chief value of the humorous story as material is that pupils are able to criticize the composition for themselves. If the story is written so that it is no longer amusing, if the point is weakened or lost, then the composition is a poor one: the teacher's verdict is no longer the arbitrary thing it often seems.

The important matter here is that we are speaking of an exercise which serves the ends of the teacher of composition admirably, and at the same time prepares the boys to meet

the demands which will be made by the teachers of history, geography, and science.

A further exercise of value is the giving of titles to the stories which are thus reproduced. The titles of articles in newspapers and of stories in magazines do not, in many cases, fulfil the same purposes as the titles and subtitles which a pupil should use when he is taking notes. There is a great deal of difference between the title which *attracts without misinforming* and the title which really *informs*. This distinction is worth discussing with classes, in language appropriate to their understanding; for even young children are acquainted with an abundance of material which will illustrate the subject under consideration.

From the story it is possible to go on to a piece of prose narration. Let the teacher talk continuously for ten minutes upon a topic—whether ships or sealing-wax or cabbages or kings, does not matter. At the end comes the question: What have I been talking about? A brief title is found and written on the blackboard. Then follows the question: What was it that I said first about this subject? Other questions follow, and in the end a complete résumé appears on the board. Here is an introduction to orderly note-taking. Pupils are soon able to take *useful* notes of a talk or lecture. A week after the lecture they are required to reproduce it as homework: here they are able to discover for themselves how useful their notes really have been!

These exercises are a useful training in thinking and in expression. Because thinking and expression by English pupils must be carried on in English, and because all school work calls for thinking and expression, the work done in the English classes may be regarded, without exaggeration, as the groundwork of all the school studies. On this account the English work of the school raises a great many difficult problems of organization. Whatever has to suffer, on account of poverty of equipment, it should not be the English. A great deal of lower-form and junior work is still done by



teachers with high qualifications in the subjects they teach to seniors, but who are merely "filling in time" with the juniors.<sup>1</sup> Whatever else sheer necessity may determine, English should never be allowed to suffer in this way. A headmaster, too, often discovers that a highly-qualified graduate, who has specialized in some one branch of English, is unable to appreciate the problems which arise in connexion with the teaching of English in schools; sometimes, too, unable to express himself with the ease and freedom which we demand from senior pupils. The problems of organization in English include the careful selection of the right members of the staff for the various tasks, the provision of adequate materials and proper utilization of resources, the allocation of ample time, and the proper relating of English studies to the rest of the school work.

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## CHAPTER IX

### Drama in the Classroom and in the School

It is the custom in many secondary schools to produce annually a school play or opera for performance before old scholars and parents. The major parts are filled by old pupils, minor parts by senior pupils, whilst pupils in the middle and lower forms take walking-on parts, participate in crowd scenes, or make up the chorus. The production is usually in charge of an enthusiastic teacher.

The annual "school play" is seldom any concern of the teacher of English. But its popularity is something that should assure him of the wide and strong appeal of drama,

<sup>1</sup> "Teacher with good honours degree in geography required. May be required to take some French with lower forms. . . ." Advertisements of this kind still appear.

and set him wondering in what ways he might utilize this, and direct the enthusiasm into the channels provided by English studies. After all, the writing of drama is as legitimate an English exercise as the writing of stories, essays, or poems; and the production of drama on the stage is the purpose of writing drama. Written drama must stand the test of production—otherwise, excellent as may be the writing, it is bad drama. If then the teacher of English is to encourage his classes to write plays, he must be prepared to provide facilities for acting them. The would-be dramatists in the class will have the good fortune to be able to submit their work to a test which is more real and convincing than a teacher's arbitrary mark.

It is important that the teacher and the class alike should not be biased by the type of production which is usual in the ordinary commercial theatre. They should not believe for instance, that realistic costumes and scenery and a proscenium are essential to a production. The teacher might tell his class something about the Greek theatre, about outdoor pageants, about the performance of "mystery plays" in market-places, in booths, and in the churchyards, and about the Shakespearean stage. He may tell the class something about puppet shows and pantomime. He may send them to the public library in search of information.

First attempts may not be encouraging. In one class in a senior school a teacher suggested to children that perhaps part of Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*, which they were reading at the time, might be dramatized. Two boys offered themselves as King Arthur and Sir Bedivere. The former lay down on the floor, and the other bent over him. Sir Bedivere said, "I'm afraid you're going to die." Arthur replied, "I'm afraid I am." Then the two boys stood up and looked at the class, not knowing how to go on. Not very encouraging, this! But no practical teacher expects perfect success on the first occasion. Everybody who has studied drama knows very well that drama is difficult, and that all the experiments

in staging and production are attempts to overcome difficulties. As a matter of fact, nothing could have been better for the class than this first failure. They laughed for a few minutes at the comic attempt which had been made, and then were ready to settle down to discussion of the question—"What was wrong?"

The first suggestion was that the boys should have said more. There was general agreement on this point. The teacher's question followed: "What should they have said? Think it over this evening, and then write down some conversation for them." Then came the suggestion that the boys ought to look a little more like knights, and that one ought to look like a king. How could this be arranged? Some boys offered to make wooden swords, and a girl to make a crown, of cardboard, gilded. Next a boy suggested that some kind of scenery should be made. The next morning pupils brought to school with them suggestions for words to be spoken by Arthur and Bedivere. The teacher prepared the blackboard, and gradually dialogue was built up from suggestions made by the class from the scripts they had written overnight. The boy who had made himself responsible for the scenery had brought a large piece of dark blue wrapping paper. On this he had drawn a local chapel, with its walls broken down and with a cross, minus an arm, on its roof. He had adapted something he knew well to the form of the "ruined chancel with a broken cross" of his imagination.

Everything was now ready, and the class looked forward with interest to the production on the next day. The boys chosen as actors made copies of their parts, took them home and rehearsed them. The next morning they gave a performance which, if it would not have satisfied a professional producer, gave a great deal of real delight to the children. A poem they liked a great deal became alive to them. They saw before them something to whose making they had contributed. And thus the performance meant more to them, and gave them more, than the ordinary commercial play, how-

ever capably produced and acted, could possibly have meant.

The material for dramatization is to hand in the books read by the class, in school and out. The stories of fiction and of history can be lived through in make-believe, and therefore can be acted, more or less completely. In the endeavour to write and produce drama the children will find themselves faced with the actual difficulties which have confronted the dramatist from the time when men first began to write plays. How are we to show the lapse of time? How are we to indicate the place where the action occurs? How shall we show two places simultaneously?

The discussion of these problems and the making of attempts to solve them will afford a great deal of interest. The teachers of art and of handwork will often co-operate, since frequently they are only too glad to find projects which will give direction and purpose to their own work.

Obviously, in the classroom—and the earliest experiments will not be suited for presentation beyond its limits—any sort of staging, in the usual sense of the word, is out of the question. Nevertheless, attempts at costume and the suggestion of scenery are very useful helps to make-believe. Children show a great deal of ingenuity in adapting gowns and curtains to the purposes of drama. Weapons, for historical plays, can be made of wood, covered with metal foil to represent steel. Crowns and jewels can be made of cardboard, with gold foil or the coloured metallic wrappings from chocolates. The children will learn a number of excellent lessons in the art of adapting means to ends.

At first the attempts at dramatization should be limited to simple stories and historical episodes. A few among the many which might be utilized are the following:

- (a) The story of Cædmon.
- (b) Canute and his courtiers.
- (c) The coming of Augustine.
- (d) Alfred in the neatherd's hut.
- (e) The signing of Magna Carta.

The reading of *Pickwick Papers*, the *Christmas Carol*, and *Oliver Twist* will suggest many episodes which are suited for adaptation for dramatic presentation. Dickens is particularly easy to adapt, since he was himself a dramatist, and perhaps wrote with the feeling that his characters were speaking and moving in his presence. The fact that he was a practical dramatist, too, in his early childhood, organizing his family into a group of actors who performed plays which he adapted from the few books to which he had access, should encourage both teacher and pupils.

The dramatizing of a more complicated story, such as *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, will raise many of the problems already suggested. Very clearly one of the scenes will be the council meeting, at which the piper first presents himself, and strikes a bargain. Later, the council scene will be repeated, when the piper, having rid the town of rats, finds that the council repudiates its agreement. How may we show the distress caused by the plague of rats in the first place, the ridding of the rats later on? The piper's revenge we can show, perhaps, by a dumb pageant of children following the piper. But how shall we end the play?

It will be a great day in the history of the class when something which they have created and worked on is adjudged worthy to show to the whole school, on the platform in the school hall. Everybody who has worked at the production will feel repaid. The applause and congratulations will make everybody feel that work at English studies is worth while; but even more convincing than these will be the spectacle of something attempted and accomplished, and the feeling on the part of every member of the class that he has had some part in the matter.

### Literary Festivals

This is perhaps the place to suggest that English studies might gain more recognition in the school if they became

the starting-point for literary festivals, modelled to some extent on the Welsh Eisteddfod. The senior school and the secondary school alike are usually organized on the "house system", and there is keen competition in sports between the various houses. There seems no reason why there should not be equally keen competition in what may broadly be termed the "arts". It should be easy for the teachers of English, art, and handwork to meet together and to suggest the form such competitions should take, and to draw up the rules for the adjudication of entries and the award of points. If a trophy can be awarded to the winning house for the year, so much the better; but the mention of the victory in the school records and in the school magazine is often sufficient incentive. Obviously, the quality and character of the entries will be largely determined by the character of the teaching done in the classes, and the teachers of the various "arts" subjects will be expected to stimulate competitors, without bias. The public exhibition of the winning work, and the performance of the winning entries, is a possible means of earning a little money for the many things which a school always needs and for which there is no provision of public money.

Some of the headings under which competitions may be devised are the following:

- (a) An original short story.
- (b) An original poem.
- (c) An essay of given length on a set subject.
- (d) The production by the House of a drama written by members of the house.
- (e) Solo singing.
- (f) Solo instrumental playing.
- (g) Choral singing.
- (h) Drawing.
- (i) Design.
- (j) Water-colour painting.

- (k) The making in wood or metal of a specified article.
- (l) Designing and executing a poster announcing a school event.

A competition of this kind has been carried out for some years in the Hornsey County School, and has proved a direct stimulus to work in music, art, craftwork, and English. The pupils in the various houses attach as great importance to the winning of the "Arts Trophy" as to the winning of the Sports Championship.

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## CHAPTER X

# The School Magazine

Very directly connected with the work of the English teacher is the organizing and conduct of the school magazine. In the majority of senior schools it will generally be found advisable to have a member of the staff as editor, partly because the editing of a magazine calls for technical knowledge which a boy can hardly acquire in his early years, and partly because only in this way can any sort of continuity be assured.

The path of an editor is usually a thorny one. On the one hand, it is very difficult to make the position of the magazine financially sound, unless the parents of pupils are well-to-do; and on the other, it is not easy in a school to ensure contributions sufficiently varied and interesting to make the magazine worth producing. If the editor happens to be the teacher of English, then his work will bring him into personal touch with possible contributors. He will be able to talk to them about his wants, and perhaps, by sympathetic encouragement, persuade them to fulfil them. Part of the

financial difficulty may be overcome by getting advertisements for the magazine. But the editor ought to be perfectly frank with his advertisers. The majority of them cannot hope to get back, in profit through increased trading, the cost of advertising. Their payments are practically subscriptions to the magazine funds, without hope of return.

It is well to have the magazine printed by a local jobbing printer. The editor of the magazine should endeavour to know something of the leading principles of typography, display, and make-up. It is bad policy to go to any cheap firm if the cheapness is gained by the use of bad paper, broken type, and bad workmanship. The magazine ought to introduce pupils to good typography and paper, and to the appreciation of books which are good examples of the book-making craft.

One of the editor's difficulties, and not the least, will come from the people who have little to say, but do not know how to say that little briefly. Members of the staff are often offenders in this respect. They write articles about their own private views, without realizing that the best way to get an article read is to make it interesting and of reasonable length. Consequently the editor will find it well to make definite rules at the start, since he will then be able to return work to contributors because it violates the rules: he is much less likely to offend them so, than if he tells them he does not consider it suitable.

The magazine should be, in the main, topical. The editor cannot hope to produce travel articles which can compete with those published in the magazines; but he can, on the other hand, produce a brightly written personal experience of a member of the school during a holiday expedition. He can produce stories and verses which, even if they are not topical in the narrow sense of the word, nevertheless present a school point of view. Only by keeping this aim before him can the editor hope to give his magazine a distinctive character of its own.



The editor should make a point of having one or two of the senior pupils working with him as assistant editors, and of giving them all the work he can leave to them. They may learn to correct proofs, to read articles submitted and to pass them to the editor with a recommendation. They may act as special correspondents, attending school matches and other functions for the purpose of writing them up for the magazine. They should organize, too, throughout the school, a corps of class and house correspondents who will gather the various items of school gossip that are so interesting, though, as a rule, so badly reported.

Used in this way, the magazine can be made a very important part of the school life. When its approval is valued and its disapproval feared, its prestige in the school is assured. Pupils begin to read it from cover to cover. Mention of oneself in the magazine is eagerly sought after. It is high praise of creative work for the writer to be told: "That is nearly good enough for the magazine. Revise it and send it to the editor." At this stage the magazine becomes a real incentive to good work in English, and a valuable ally of the English teacher.

# HANDWRITING

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

From time to time the commercial world expresses grave dissatisfaction with some particular element in the subjects of instruction in our schools. Some years since the attack was concentrated on arithmetic. It was stated that the boys and girls—especially the boys—on entering business offices displayed a serious inability to reach a reasonable standard of accuracy in dealing with simple arithmetical problems. It appeared that they could attempt the solution of them in a variety of ways—ancient and modern—but the answers were almost invariably wrong. This caused much searching of heart among the teachers, and for a time the ideal of accuracy became the great objective in the schoolroom.

At the present time the charge is that penmanship is at fault, both as regards legibility and speed. The complaints come from such a number of otherwise sympathetic sources that they cannot possibly be disregarded. It therefore becomes necessary to investigate the matter thoroughly and discover how an improvement in handwriting can be effected. It is interesting to note in this connexion that during the past few years radical changes have been and are being made in the teaching of this subject which should have a beneficent effect on the handwriting of the future. This will be dealt

with fully later on. It remains, however, to be seen what are the main factors which may possibly have been responsible for any deterioration which has taken place during the admitted general advance of the schools in recent years.

From the writer's careful study of many thousands of essays of children still at school, there does not appear to be any serious falling off in legibility, and this is confirmed by others who are still engaged in the inspection of schools. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that much less time is at present devoted to the direct teaching of handwriting in schools than formerly, and possibly correct writing habits are less permanently fixed than in former days. Whatever may be said against the old copybook methods, with their countless repetitions of imitating the model at the top of the page, they did produce a permanent legible style of a certain type of handwriting.

In these circumstances, if a considerable interval elapses between leaving school and entering an office, and there has been very little practice in writing during the intervening period, the old methods would have the advantage. Loss of practice may affect very seriously the ability to write well; many adults who reached a good standard of handwriting at school become poor writers in later life unless the good habits were permanently fixed. Evidence of this is to be found in the fact that well-educated men frequently write their signatures in typewritten letters so badly that it is becoming a common practice to give the interpretation in typescript below the written name.

Another reason for the possible deterioration is a factor which also gravely threatens the fate of really good handwriting in the days to come, and that is the extraordinary progress in efficiency made in typewriting. Every important advance in this direction weakens the commercial value of the skilled writer. The fact that now we can dictate straight on to the machine without the intervention of the shorthand clerk is not only a time-saving device, but it also removes

an important potential source of error. The typewriter, indispensable in the business office, is invading the home, and is becoming a frequent travelling companion of the novelist. Consciously or subconsciously this rapid progress of writing by machinery may affect the attitude of the teacher and the taught, to the time devoted to reaching a high standard in handwriting.

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## CHAPTER II

### Script Writing

It is well to remember the advances being made in the mechanical means of conveying our thoughts to others, as nothing is so helpful and stimulating as healthy competition. Moreover, the fact that the commercial world at the moment complains of the unsatisfactory state of school penmanship makes it imperative that, for this reason also, we should put our house in order. The great reform which is taking place in handwriting is not now confined to Great Britain: for it has spread to practically all civilized countries, and its introduction is being welcomed by teachers with the greatest enthusiasm in widely different parts of the world. Incidentally the new movement meets admirably the more important points to which reference has been made as possible elements in the lowering of the standard of calligraphy.

In discussing the movement for the reform in handwriting, a well-known authority on educational procedure says: "There never has been since the beginning of popular education so swift and radical a change in the mode of teaching a fundamental subject." The history of its general introduction is of interest. The writer in reading a large number of children's essays on air-raids during the war was much impressed by the extraordinary legibility and excellence of the handwriting of those obtained from the girls in two non-

provided schools. On visiting these schools it was found that the style of writing had been in use for some time and had been suggested, or at any rate much encouraged, by one of His Majesty's Inspectors.

The attention of the Child Study Society was drawn to the matter, and the headmistresses of the schools in question were invited to read papers to its members on "The New Method of Handwriting". Great enthusiasm was aroused and many experiments were started in the schools. At a subsequent meeting, another of H.M. Inspectors—a warm supporter of the project—contributed a paper on "Some Artistic Aspects of Manuscript Writing". To meet the great demand for further information, a special committee of the Society was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. James Kerr, who stated: "For the learner simplicity is the great desideratum, for the scholar legibility and speed, to which all other considerations are quite secondary. For these reasons the spatial forms of written and printed words, the characteristic shapes and relations of the letters and spaces, should approximate as much as possible.

"With properly chosen manuscript writing all these conditions are fulfilled, and further, not only the young child, but the wounded soldier learning to write with the left hand, will find his task shortened and simplified by adopting this style, particularly that without the use of unnecessary connecting upstrokes."

Later on it was decided to use the term "script writing" in preference to "manuscript writing".

**Advantages.**—The advantages claimed for this type of handwriting are:

1. That it practically removes the great disadvantage of two kinds of script with which the child has to contend in learning to read and to write.

2. That it is particularly easy to acquire, involving only combinations of straight lines and circles, with the result that the serious obstacle to the child of the ascending loop

is postponed until a later stage of technical skill is reached.

3. That all children can acquire it; there are no failures, as in the case of ordinary writing.

4. That it is very legible and forms a good basis for a permanent style of writing.

5. That it improves the spelling; a comparison with the printed word is now possible and checks the mistake, whereas cursive writing gives no such assistance.

6. That children can attain a higher speed in script than in cursive writing.

**Preliminary Exercises.**—Dr. Montessori has shown that with preliminary exercises at a very early age a valuable preparation can be given for handwriting experiences. Greater advantage should be taken of this in the future. The learning of writing being without much intellectual content is usually a tedious task to an intelligent child, but handwriting springs quite naturally from an interesting course of preliminary tactual and muscular training. No difficulty is experienced in using the writing instruments, and the act of writing becomes as interesting an occupation as reading.

The preparatory exercises in the Montessori System are, moreover, of such a nature that very young children can perform them without the slightest risk of over-strain or of bringing into play the finer accessory muscles at too early a stage. In fact, from the point of view of the tactual portion of the training, the earlier it is undertaken the better. It is well known that with very young children the favourite, and for a long time the most valuable, method of obtaining information about external objects is through the sense of touch, and it is surprising that in the infant school in the past this valuable sense has been very little used for educational purposes.

It is agreed that the sooner a mechanical act like that of handwriting becomes automatic, the better. Provided always that the preliminary operations can be made thoroughly interesting and physiologically harmless to the child, there can be no possible object in postponing them to an age when the

time can be more usefully employed in exercises involving more intellectual content.

A word of warning is necessary with regard to the use of tactual exercises with very young children as a preparation for handwriting. If raised or sunken letters are used, and the child passes a finger over them to get a tactual memory—if such a term may be used—of the letter-shape, it is of the utmost importance that the models to be remembered should be beyond reproach. The tactual memory—which is very tenacious—of an imperfect series of letter-forms may do serious injury. Re-education in such a case is a difficult matter, and moreover there is always a tendency to revert to the first-learnt shape.

As time goes on our handwriting changes, especially if we see other forms which we desire to imitate. There are, however, certain idiosyncrasies which give the handwriting a character of its own, and which can be detected by the expert in cases of forgery. When a style of calligraphy is fairly well established, the writing of a blindfolded child is practically the same as that in which visual experiences are available. People who become blind soon after the art of handwriting has been acquired retain the childish style of early life, however, and make no progress with advancing years.

In educational procedure we are abnormally conservative in our outlook, and experiences of the past are far more highly treasured than in other human activities. We do not place such value on what is termed "the open mind" and regard it as a virtue, as, for example, in the area of politics. It is well that it should be so. If we turned lightly from one method of education to another, it would lead to great confusion and deprive any established system of that stability which is so essential to success. This safeguarding of methods, which have stood the test of time in our scheme of education, from frequent change is thus of the greatest value and importance.

On the other hand this attitude, if too vigorously maintained, may prevent the adoption of reforms of considerable im-

portance. This, however, has not been the case in the reception given to the introduction of script writing. The generous response to suggestions for the improvement in the teaching of handwriting, supported whole-heartedly by a large body of progressive teachers, has resulted, after a necessary and inevitable amount of adverse but friendly criticism, in what appears to be a permanent advance. As to the ease of learning script writing and its legibility, there could be no question. The amount of evidence as to its beneficent influence on spelling would also seem to justify its claim in this connexion. The most severe criticism was based upon the contention that, from its nature, the speed of cursive writing must be greater than that of script writing.

**Speed.**—It was agreed from the beginning that, no matter however fully the other claims might be recognized, the element of speed was vital. Any method which involved a lowering of the important element of speed in handwriting would ultimately be doomed to failure. At first sight it might reasonably be argued that the raising of the pen from the paper after each letter would involve a loss of time compared with that in which no such removal was necessary. Binet, however, found long ago that, with equal legibility, connected lettering was slower than detached lettering. The verdict of such a distinguished authority was most encouraging. Nevertheless, it was absolutely necessary to perform detailed experiments among British children to discover whether Binet's result could be confirmed.

In the early days of the reform movement, the writer, who had already obtained norms of the speed of cursive handwriting for London children at different ages, carried out experiments with 186 children who had for some considerable time practised script writing. The results at the ages of 7, 8, and 9 years indicated quite clearly that the script writers had a marked advantage in speed over the cursive writers. This was very satisfactory, but naturally, with such a small number of children, it was not possible



to reach any definite conclusion, and it was decided to perform experiments on a much larger mass of material when the new method was more firmly established.

After an interval of four years, script writing was used in so many schools that the time appeared to be ripe for a conclusive experiment on the all-important question of speed. It was decided to test the children in two of the London districts where the new type of writing was known to be very popular. The investigation was limited to the examination of those children who had been doing script for two years or more.

To give some idea of the extraordinary rapidity with which the new movement had spread, it is sufficient to state that in place of 186 children available for tests in the whole of London, there were after the interval—in only two districts—no less than 13,360 (4096 boys and 9264 girls) children who had qualified for the test. In addition to this, 1617 examples of script writing were obtained from infants' schools; thus making a grand total of about 15,000 children who were tested.

With such large numbers, if the test were properly applied, there could be no possible doubts as to the trustworthiness of the conclusions reached.

The results were as follows:

Boys			
Number.	Age.	Letters per Minute.	Norms for Cursive Writing.
175	7	24·1	13·9
786	8	24·8	17·4
854	9	29·8	25·1
734	10	38·1	32·9
618	11	42·8	40·2
490	12	46·4	46·6
439	13	50·7	53·9
<hr/> 4096			

## GIRLS

Number.	Age.	Letters per Minute.	Norms for Cursive Writing.
373	7	21.6	18.8
1536	8	25.5	21.4
1609	9	34.9	29.3
1572	10	42.4	36.1
1449	11	48.7	44.5
1509	12	55.0	49.3
1216	13	60.9	61.0
<hr/>			
9264			

## INFANTS

28	5	11.5
707	6	14.4
882	7	20.5
<hr/>		
1617		

Quite apart from the conclusiveness of these results, on such a large mass of material as to make them absolutely reliable, it must be remembered that the norms for cursive writing were based on the performances of children who from the beginning had used this style of writing. In the script tests, on the other hand, the children had only for a comparatively short time employed this new method. The differences would have been far more striking if script writing had been used throughout the school life. In support of this it may be stated that, in those schools in which the method had been employed for four years, the speed was far greater and was as clearly marked at the ages of twelve and thirteen as at the earlier ages. From central schools, the children over fourteen years of age showed quite a remarkable increase of speed, but as there were only two to

three hundred examples, they were not included in the statistics. In judging of the results, it is evident that, where script writing has been in use for a considerable time, the differences at twelve and thirteen years are quite as marked as at the earlier ages. The reason why, in the results, the speeds of children at these ages come so near to those in cursive writing is that the habits associated with ordinary writing had been firmly established before script writing had been adopted.

Another experiment with regard to speed was carried out in a large boys' school in the country, and produced very interesting results. About six months before the investigation, the boys learnt script writing and used it for some subjects and ordinary writing for others. The whole of the top class, consisting of thirty-six boys, were tested in both styles with the same material. The tests were so arranged that any advantage of order in making them was in favour of the cursive style. The average age of the boys was 11·8 years. The speed in letters per minute for ordinary writing was 67·2, which showed that the boys had acquired a habit of rapid writing, the result being considerably above normal. The script test, however, yielded a still better result, giving an average of 72 letters per minute and the writing was better and much more legible. This very remarkable victory in speed of the script over the cursive writer is of very special interest as showing the ease of transfer from the more difficult to the easier type of writing. Abundant evidence of this can be found in many schools where the teachers have changed over in order to teach script writing more effectively. An interesting case in this connexion is reported from the offices of a local education authority, in which a very competent private secretary was seriously handicapped by the illegibility of her handwriting. On transferring to script writing, however, she became far and away the best writer on the staff.

Thorndike and Daniel Starch, in their experiments on handwriting in America, found that great differences existed

in the speed at which children wrote in different schools. In London elementary schools there is also the greatest possible variety. In one school good careful writing is the objective, the letters being well shaped and the form being all that can be desired, but no great speed is acquired by the close of the school course. Another equally good school places less stress on the perfect form of the letters, and provided the writing is legible, and reaches a fairly good standard of form, pays more attention to the quantity written in a given time.

In carrying out the speed tests in the London schools the same material was employed as that used in the American schools, viz. "Mary had a little lamb", but the children had five-minute tests (see pp. 156-8), whereas the American tests were for two minutes. As the children undoubtedly wrote less quickly at the end of the time than at the beginning, it is evident that a two-minute test would have given somewhat higher results. The five-minute test, however, is much more satisfactory than one for a shorter period, and the results are far more reliable. The English child writes quite as quickly as the American child. The statistics would seem to indicate that this is not so, but this is largely due to the shorter period for testing, and to the fact that the speed tests were given in America at the end of the school year. Thus grade II results are those of children who were on the point of passing into grade III. The same applies to other grades.

The results of the tests are given in actual, not mental ages. It was found in classes with a wide range of age that the older children almost invariably wrote more quickly than the younger children in the same class. This is probably because practice counts for so much in speed writing. Age for age, however, the clever child writes more quickly than the dull child. This is a general experience.

Further evidence might be adduced with regard to the superiority of script writing as regards speed, but it is not necessary. The results of all experiments on the subject point in the same direction and fully confirm the work of

Binet. One of the chief reasons for this advantage is that rhythm plays an all-important part in writing speed, and as will be seen, the new movement of detached lettering vastly improves the conditions for this purpose.

**Legibility.**—In Thorndike's work on the *Quality of Hand-writing in Teachers and Children*, he found that children of thirteen and fourteen years of age wrote much better than their teachers; and he found that with regard to legibility no improvement takes place after the age of eleven in the average child. This is confirmed by Starch's experiments.

There is general agreement among teachers that in script writing the maximum legibility is reached at ten years of age. Beyond that period there is no necessity for further instruction in writing. It is, however, wise to guard against any attempt at ornamentation to which children are prone. Any departure from simplicity in style tends to reduce legibility.

Dr. Ballard, in his Chapter on Script Writing in *The Changing School*, defines the position admirably:

"To sum up the essentials of the movement, script writing is historically a return to a tradition that had lapsed for over four hundred years; from the utilitarian point of view it is a return to legibility; from the pedagogical point of view it is a return to simplicity and economy of learning; and from the artistic point of view it is a return from prettiness of decoration to beauty of essential structure."

In dealing with the artistic aspect of script writing, one of H.M. Inspectors says:

"The artistic point of view seems worthy of some attention, because in modern times people have got into the habit of regarding writing merely as a means of recording and communicating ideas, and have overlooked the fact that good writing—consisting of letters of good form well arranged on the page—has a certain simple beauty of its own.

"This could not so easily have been overlooked in the

old days before the invention of printing, for there was then a criterion of skilful and beautiful workmanship to be found in the book-writing of the professional scribes. It is with the hope of setting a similar high standard in these modern days that certain artists have devoted much time to the study and practice of beautiful penmanship.

“With a written or printed page considered simply as a piece of surface decoration, success as decoration or ornament does not primarily depend on the characters being intelligible. For example, a fine Persian or Arabic or Hebrew manuscript will be appreciated for its beauty even by those unable to read it; and it is clear that the beauty of the writing is the outcome of fine form, good proportion and arrangement, and so forth, just as it is in any other kind of flat decoration. But with a page written in familiar characters another factor obtrudes itself, and there cannot be much satisfaction with the writing unless it possesses the primary quality of *readableness*; for if it be not readable it does not fulfil its chief purpose; and fitness for purpose is an essential element of beauty.

“Readableness depends upon many things, of which perhaps the most important are the following:

“1. Each individual letter should have a perfectly characteristic form of its own, which cannot possibly allow it to be mistaken for any other letter.

“2. The letters should be as simple as possible, having no unnecessary parts.

“3. The letters forming a word should be so compactly grouped together that the eye may grasp the whole word at a glance and not be obliged to spell it letter by letter.”

It might appear that too much space has been devoted to script writing in this section on handwriting. As a matter of fact, however, this reform goes far beyond its influence on determining the particular style of calligraphy to be adopted in the schools. It sets up a standard of legibility, ease of acquirement, and beauty of form which will in-

evitably sound the death knell of the employment of unnecessary loops and extravagant flourishes in any future scheme of handwriting which may be evolved. Moreover, the very elements of handwriting which are now doomed are those which in the past have been the prime factors in the difficulties attending the teaching of the subject.

The habit of making straight lines and circles, which are the true basis of the modern form, is easily acquired by children. No exercises in making such figures as pothooks are necessary; if ever they had any justification it was simply to prepare children to deal with the ascending loop later on. Abandon the superfluous loop and the flourish and a very large percentage of the difficulty of learning to write has disappeared. This is no exaggeration. Some time ago the writer visited many native schools in South and East Africa, and he was much impressed by the fact that everywhere script and nothing but script writing was to be found. Before the advent of script writing the teaching of handwriting was the most difficult of all subjects in the native schools. Now it is the easiest. A whole class of one of these schools wrote specimens for the visitor and there was not a single failure. A similar experience has been reported about the native schools in India.

A curiously significant result has been obtained in a residential school for crippled boys in Sussex which bears upon the same point. Most of the boys are prepared for various branches of cabinet-making or other forms of the skilled wood industries. They work from their own plans, and with these there is a certain amount of lettering in which the boys reach a good standard with very little difficulty. On the other hand their lecture notes compared very unfavourably with the excellent lettering associated with the plans. On giving up cursive writing and learning script there was a transformation scene, and the lecture notes reached the same standard of excellence as the lettering (fig. 1). It is thus quite clear that not only is this type of

handwriting easily learnt but that transfer can, as we have previously seen, readily be carried out from cursive to script.

**Artistic Handwriting.**—In the fifteenth century writing

Napoleon crosses the Alps  
At St Pierre all semblance  
of a road disappeared.  
Thenceforth, an army, horse  
& foot, laden with all the  
munitions of a campaign,  
forty field pieces included,  
were to be urged up and  
along, airy ridges of rock,

Fig. 1.—Transfer from Cursive Writing

reached its highest point of beautiful penmanship, and in the printing press this was imitated and preserved in the printed form. Later on, there came the divorce between the written and the printed record, and the tendency in



the modern movement is to return again to a closer approximation to the conditions which obtained four hundred years ago. Print is, in short, the mechanical reproduction of ideal writing of an earlier period. There can be no return to the inartistic copper-plate writing which had such a powerful hold on the professional scribes of by-gone days. The writing master who monopolized so much of the schoolchild's time in the intervening years has ceased to function.

The Clarendon Press in Tracts XXIII and XXVIII on English handwriting in the "Society for Pure English" series, have given some admirable plates of the writing of well-known men distinguished for their excellent penmanship. Tract No. XXIII is edited by Roger Fry and W. A. Lowe. The former in commenting on the examples of handwriting makes a suggestion which is worthy of careful consideration. He says: "It would probably be to the advantage of our handwriting that we should agree upon suitable abbreviated signs for our commoner words and terminations. Indeed, were it not for our habit of paying but little attention to the improvement of inventions with which we are and always have been familiar, we should hardly put up with the cumbersome and wasteful mechanism which we endure." Tract No. XXVIII is edited by Robert Bridges, with an article on handwriting by Alfred Fairbank.

In studying the plates one is impressed by the extraordinary legibility and simplicity of the various examples of penmanship given. There is practically no ornament or decoration of any kind, and the linking of letters is generally of the simplest description. In some cases, however, it is omitted altogether. The spacing, on the whole, is all that could be desired, and the rhythmical effect of many of the specimens is very marked. It is interesting to note, especially in the more recent records, a definite tendency to dispense with the ascending loops in such letters as *l*, *g*, and *y*, which increases the beauty of the handwriting.

**Linkage of Letters.**—The question of the linkage of

letters is of considerable importance. There appears to be practically a consensus of opinion among teachers in Great Britain, and this is spreading rapidly to most civilized countries, that whatever may be the merits or demerits of script writing as a permanent form of calligraphy for all ages, it is, far and away, the best for the child learning to write. Its acquirement is such an easy and rapid process that it presents no difficulty even to the dullest child. Moreover, young children become intensely interested in the work, and the creative instinct finds an excellent method of expression, which, in itself, is of very great value. There is also a consensus of opinion that by the age of ten the writing is so satisfactory that no further instruction in handwriting is necessary for the average child.

It is generally admitted that by this age habits of forming good letters have become effectively established and that these habits are carried over into any good style of writing of which script is the basis. The favourite argument for linkage, or "joining up" of the letters, is that by doing so the children can write more rapidly. This is completely erroneous, as has been shown by the detailed—almost too detailed—accounts of investigations which have proved the contrary and should have removed all doubt on the matter. Nevertheless the impression still persists and the argument retains its hold with children and adults.

Another reason frequently given is that linkage improves the appearance of the handwriting. In this connexion it should be remembered that when, in the fifteenth century, the beauty of penmanship reached its highest point, there was no linkage of the letters. An envelope addressed by Mr. Selwyn Image, together with a sample of Mr. Graily Hewitt's writing, are sufficient evidence that the absence of links does not necessarily detract from the beauty of handwriting (figs. 2 and 3). The most potent argument, however, and one which it is very difficult to meet, is that in ordinary writing the letters are linked and that writing with detached

letters appears strange. Further, it is stated that some employers prefer writing conforming to the ordinary standard.

*The Rev. S. D. Headlam,  
Wavertree,  
St. Margarets-on-Thames.*

Fig. 2.—Mr. Selwyn Image's Writing

*It is indeed a much more truly religious duty  
to acquire a habit of deliberate, legible, and  
lovely penmanship in the daily use of the  
pen, than to illuminate any quantity of texts.*

Fig. 3.—Mr. Graily Hewitt's Writing

In these circumstances it would be most unwise for children not to link up the letters before leaving school, as there might otherwise be a difficulty in obtaining employment in business

offices. Provided that this is done with suitable short joins, there is no reason why it should not be carried out easily without any special training. The teachers, however, should be careful to see that long links are avoided, otherwise, any lack of compactness of the individual words would interfere with their readableness.

It is interesting to note that the Civil Service Commissioners raise no objection to script writing, or, as it is frequently termed, printscript. The statement of the Commissioners is as follows: "Preference will not be accorded to any particular style of handwriting; printscript (in which the letters resemble the type used by printers) and the ordinary cursive hand are equally acceptable". This is a very welcome pronouncement to the advocates of reform in handwriting. The Board of Education in their *Suggestions for Teachers* (1927) recommend the use of printscript up to the age of nine or ten years, and then, to meet external demands, suggest "a forward step of some sort".

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### CHAPTER III

## The Mechanism of Writing

In addition to the tactual exercises referred to as a useful preparation for learning to write, the early stages should include finger writing in sand, chalk work on the board, and the use of a soft pencil on paper.

There is a considerable diversity of opinion among teachers as to the use of lines in the beginnings of the writing process. Some would go so far as to banish lines entirely. There is general agreement, however, that in any case, apart from a basal line to assist the development of a writing habit of the horizontal arrangement of words in a definite order, the

practice of writing between lines, so that the letters touch the one above and that below, serves only a very limited purpose, and, if introduced at all, it should be discarded as soon as possible. A distinguished expert, who has made a

careful study of the pressure exerted in writing, has shown that prolonged use of double lines interferes seriously with the rhythmical nature of the writing, which is essential to the attainment of a satisfactory style of calligraphy.

#### Correct Posture.

—The correct posture of a child in writing is a matter of considerable importance, as permanent injury may result from a constant cramped position of the body at the writing-desk. The school medical officer, of course, should naturally be on the look-out for



Fig. 4.—Correct Writing Posture

any departure from the normal attitude. The *Suggestions for Teachers* issued by the Board of Education contain a simple statement which can be followed without difficulty: "A child when prepared to write should be required to sit upright and squarely on the seat with his shoulders level and parallel

to the desk or table and with his feet placed firmly in front of him on the foot-rest or on the floor, the weight of the body being equally distributed so as to avoid the hunching-up of one shoulder" (see fig. 4).

The most valuable information with regard to the details of the act of writing is contained in a monograph on *The Handwriting Movement: A Study of the Motor Factors of Excellence in Penmanship* by Professor Frank D. Freeman of the University of Chicago. The aim of the investigation was to analyse the writing of good and bad writers in order to discover the difference between them, and then by a course of training to effect a transfer from the bad to the good.

The research was of the most elaborate description, every movement of the writer being recorded by the cinematograph. After starting the investigation it was soon found necessary to extend the original scheme, and then, subsidized by the General Education Board, a more detailed plan was adopted in the session 1915-6. The attempt to effect the necessary transfer by training was carried out in 1916-7, and the complete monograph (169 pages) was published in 1918. The motion-picture photographs are most illuminating as showing the points of difference between the records of good and bad writers. The information thus given afforded valuable evidence as to the course of training to be pursued. The results obtained by experiments in all the grades—before and after training—demonstrated clearly by a marked improvement in every case the great value of the research.

The following summary indicates many of the more important features of the investigation:

1. The forearm should be nearly perpendicular to the line of writing.
2. The hand should face downwards, so that the wrist is not inclined at an angle of more than 45 degrees.
3. The hand should slide on the third and fourth fingers.
4. The grasp of the pen should be light with the fingers

moderately curved and with the forefinger resting on the penholder lower down than the thumb.

5. The sideward movement of the hand across the line should be free and exercises should be given to make it so.

6. The letters may be formed by such a combination of fingers and arm movements as is most natural to the pupils.

7. The pupil should be given training which will form the habit of organizing the writing movement into units which are well adapted to the form of the letters.

From this exhaustive research many points of the greatest interest and importance emerge, some of which settle quite definitely matters upon which considerable differences of opinion have been held by various authorities on the process of handwriting. Perhaps the most significant is the clear proof that pauses occupy a larger percentage of total writing time in good than in poor writers. Thus the supposed value of keeping the pen in contact with the paper for a long time—which is effected by linkage—is shown not to exist. The fact is clearly demonstrated that good rapid writers are invariably rhythmical writers and the more perfect the rhythm the better and speedier the writing.

**Rhythm.**—The subject of rhythm has not received anything like the amount of attention it deserves from the student of handwriting. In discussing the question of writing too long between lines, it was stated that this impaired the rhythmical effect from the point of view of pressure. If pressure curves are made of good writing the rhythmical nature is clearly shown.

The grip-pressure—in the holding of the pen—is also rhythmical under normal conditions, and there is apparently a marked relation between the two pressures which can be shown by the curves illustrating them. With an increased writing-pressure the pen is gripped more strongly. These changes of pressure occur unconsciously and vary with the individual. With an increase of speed there is generally associated an increase of pressure. Young children, according

to Meumann, produce strokes with approximately the same speed. Not so with adults, with whom there is greater variety as the writing becomes increasingly rhythmical. The writing impulses of the child are simpler in type than those of the adult. For further particulars of writing-pressures, see Drever's *The Analytical Study of the Mechanism of Writing*.

In analysing the records of writing processes, it is seen that when the movements are in definite units, and the letter material is also broken up into appropriate units and there is a close correspondence between them, good and speedy writing results. It is the failure to bring about this correspondence which is a marked feature of the poor writer. Loops interfere seriously with the formation of good units.

As a child grows older his writing becomes more rhythmical and there is a considerable increase in the rapidity and accuracy of the writing movements. The duration of the successive strokes becomes much more uniform than in the slow writing of earlier days. It was found in a public school that, by eight months' training in removing the faulty movements by a cinematographic investigation, there was a gain of nearly four times as much speed as the average yearly increase.

The mechanical difficulties of the poor writer were also carefully studied in the research. The movements by which letters are produced include those of the whole arm, of the hand as a whole, of the wrist joint, and of the fingers. The good writer divides the total movements into units to a much greater extent than does the poor one. In each movement the greatest speed is generally in the middle of the stroke. Poor writers have a difficulty with the sideward movement across the page, principally because they rest their hands on the side with a resultant cramping at the end of the line, whereas the hand position of the good writer is neither strained nor cramped. To remove this very common difficulty, Professor Freeman suggests a course of training for the acquisition of a free sideward movement.



When writing automatism has been adequately secured, we cease to think about our handwriting under normal conditions. If, however, great care has to be taken on special occasions, in which a high standard of calligraphy is desired, the process again becomes conscious and the formation of the constituent letters of words receives attention once more. A fluent writer signing his name in the presence of witnesses may become so self-conscious that the signature falls far below the usual standard which he has reached. This is especially the case when a long period has elapsed since writing his signature became automatic; strong conscious control prevents natural handwriting. The normal child should attain the automatic stage in handwriting by eleven or twelve years of age and be able to write fluently when blindfolded.

It is claimed that script writers reach automatism at an earlier age than those who have been taught on the cursive system. As regards legibility, very little, if any, improvement takes place after ten years of age, and long after maturity has been attained a close resemblance persists in the form of the letters to those which characterized the writing before the onset of puberty. In comparing the writing of an adult with that of his performance as a schoolboy, say at twelve years of age, many interesting points of similarity are to be observed which leave no doubt whatever as to the permanence of individual qualities in handwriting.

An excellent example of the element of permanency in handwriting is given in Saudek's interesting book, *Experiments with Handwriting*. Illustrations are given of Nelson's writing before, and ten years after, he lost his right arm. In the earlier specimen there is a definite right-hand slant, whereas in the later a less well marked left-hand slant. In the form of certain letters and the relation of the size of small letters to capitals, however, there are striking similarities. After a careful expert analysis the result reached was that "not the slightest doubt can be entertained as to their

identity". It is clear that Nelson had effectively transferred the right-hand conditioned reflexes to his left-hand writing movement.

It is possible, and not very uncommon, to acquire two styles of handwriting and be equally fluent in both, but each type has its own rhythmical system. For example, a lawyer in drawing up a will naturally adopts a different style of calligraphy to that which he employs in writing a letter to a friend, though certain individual characteristics may frequently be recognized. It is difficult to imitate mature handwriting successfully, especially if the imitator has not reached graphic maturity. This is of value in detecting forgery. If the natural writing of the forger can be obtained, traces of this will probably be found in the forged document. There are also certain pathological features in some kinds of writing which may be revealed in the investigation of forgeries. A knowledge of variations of type in handwriting associated with particular periods may also be of value in dating the writing of a suspected record.

**Spacing.**—No matter how excellent the actual penmanship of a writer may be, unless the arrangement of the written material on the page is satisfactory it must fail to produce a favourable impression. Effective spacing thus becomes a matter of the greatest importance. There are three kinds of spacing: general, horizontal, and vertical. Naturally, it must vary to some extent with the amount of material, the space available, the normal size of the particular handwriting and other conditions. With each individual word the space on either side should be approximately equal. The division, where necessary, into appropriate parts of polysyllabic words at the end of lines, is much to be preferred to ugly gaps which may result in order to avoid such division.

The horizontal arrangement of the material, even after long practice with guiding lines, offers considerable difficulty especially with rapid writers. It is necessary to be continually on one's guard to check that natural tendency to an upward

slant where there is a strong sentence-impulse. As rapid writing progresses there is also a tendency to leave the margin of the left-hand side of the page, the space between it and the beginning of the line becoming greater and greater. This drift to the right is because we think ahead of our writing. The vertical spacing, that is the distance between line and line, is much easier to keep under proper control because we have before us the normal spaces between the lines already written.

**The Left-handed Writer.**—The majority of school children are right-handed, many are ambidextrous, and others are left-handed. Since, for many reasons, the left-handed child is at a disadvantage, the important question arises as to whether we are justified in bringing pressure to bear in order to effect a transfer from left- to right-hand habits in writing. An important point to be remembered in this connexion is that “such phenomena as right- and left-handedness are not arbitrary or accidental, but have causal connexions with other facts in the bodily constitution”. Writing and speaking are undoubtedly co-ordinated motor activities, and if one is interfered with there is a great probability of interfering with the other. There is a considerable amount of evidence that stammering is frequently produced when definitely left-handed children are forced to become right-handed. It is concluded that this is connected with the close association of the speech- with the writing-centre in the brain. From statistics it would appear that whereas the normal percentage of stammerers among school children is 2 per cent, that among those who have changed from left- to right-handed writers is 17 per cent. A case is quoted of a boy who became a stammerer during the attempt to effect this transfer, but lost the affliction completely on reverting to his left-handedness. On the whole it is safest to follow Dr. Kerr’s advice: “Encourage the child to use his right hand, but allow the persistently left-handed to go his own way”.

Another point of interest is that when the change is effected

from left- to right-handedness the children never write with ease and do not reach a satisfactory standard of speed. In the case of definitely ambidextrous children the writings with the right and left hand are so exactly similar that it is impossible to distinguish between them. There does not appear to be any greater tendency to stammer among left-handed children than among those who are right-handed, provided always that there has been no attempt to bring about a change from left to right. Many babies are temporarily left-handed to start with, in consequence of a method of nursing which necessitates a greater use of the left hand. Later on, after a short period of ambidextrousness, a natural transference takes place as the right hand is brought more and more into play.

**Writing Material.**—In the introduction of any important reform such as that now being made in handwriting, it is necessary to avoid any severe restrictions in the nature of the instruments used and the conditions surrounding the writing process. Such restrictions gravely imperil the complete success, and general application, of the new method. Thus, although a slanting desk or stand tilted at an angle of about 30 degrees to the normal horizontal position is an undoubted advantage, and can naturally be demanded in the art room, it would be absurd to regard this as an essential condition. Whether we like it or not we must in most schoolrooms, and almost entirely in after life, accommodate ourselves to writing on a flat surface without any adventitious aids.

Similarly with regard to pens; although there are many advantages associated with the broad nib, it would be unwise to require this particular type as a condition of adopting the new form of calligraphy. In this connexion, the possessor of a fountain pen is in a highly favoured position. The ordinary person, however, must be prepared to make good use of any kind of pen available. In the specimens of beautiful penmanship of which plates are given in the Clarendon Series—to which reference has been made—there is clear evidence

that many different types of pen were used. Some of the best examples, in fact, were undoubtedly produced by fine-pointed pens.

Vertical writing has a beauty of its own and has much to be said in its favour. It appears to result in the most excellent form of penmanship. A glance at Mr. Edward Johnston's remarkable book on *Writing, Illuminating, and Lettering* is sufficient to show how much the art of writing has suffered by the adoption of a slant. The variety and perfect form of the beautiful examples with which this book is so lavishly illustrated, indicate a standard of excellence which the slant writer can never reach.

A backward slant need not seriously enter into our review. For a short time it had a very limited popularity, but its inherent ugliness was so manifest that it is no longer tolerated and has practically disappeared. The most popular, and comparatively innocuous, slant is that of about 15 degrees from the perpendicular. An enthusiastic advocate of a greater slant—using a special pen—has, however, with his pupils, reached a praiseworthy standard as indicated in a good typical specimen, of which an illustration is given (fig. 5).

Much has been written about the materials used in writing and the conditions required for their most serviceable employment. Within proper limits, however, it is necessary to give adequate scope for individual preferences. Thus, a straight pen, as it is termed, may be insisted upon in a course of training, and produce satisfactory results. In general use, however, the slanting position, which is more natural, is almost universally adopted as it gives greater freedom, whereas the other method of holding the pen in a somewhat cramped position may be tiring, especially in the case of very rapid writing.

In the illustrations, a form of lettering which appears to be generally acceptable is given (figs. 6 and 7), but naturally in the spread of the reformed system there will be many variations which should be welcomed. Provided always

that the requirements of legibility, simplicity, beauty of form and readableness—a most important quality—are reasonably fulfilled, variety rather than uniformity should be

## *Sloping Script;*

*We are limited to a few lines of Sloping Script. written on ordinary school paper, ruled with single lines, to show how we write in ordinary life, without any special effort to show off. People who are quite satisfied to go on scribbling in the dreadful, illegible cursive hand-writing of the last hundred years or so have all sorts of objections to make to this sort of writing. They are sure it must be slow; it must eliminate character; others would forge*

Fig. 5.—A Good Specimen of Sloping Script

the objective. The danger of the improved method of calligraphy resulting in one definite uninteresting type of hand-writing with a loss of individuality has ceased to exist with its general acceptance by different kinds of schools. The student of script writing will now find as great—if not greater

—variety as when the copper-plate ideals were in vogue, and when copybook demands—involving the slavish adoption of particular models—constituted the basis of the teaching.



Fig. 6.—A Scheme of Lettering

Associated with the reform of handwriting, with a very considerable reduction of time devoted to purely manual operations, there is a greater opportunity for development on the artistic side of the writing process. The closer union

of handwriting with the art room, which would surely follow, would be of the greatest possible advantage to the children,

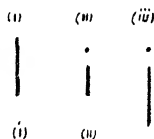
# Small Letters

The 2 elements on which letter forms are built



The stroke forms 3 bases.

- (i) long strokes - above line
- (ii) short " ( $\frac{1}{2}$  length)
- (iii) long - dropped



Adding a curve to tops of these same forms gives . . . . .



An intermediate length between (i) & (ii) gives . . . . .

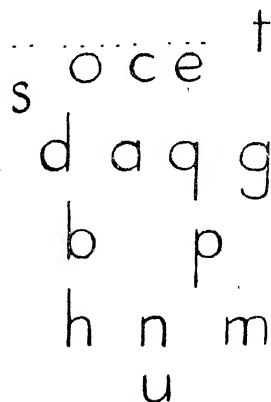
The 'o' forms 3 letters

Parts of 2 circles . . . . .

'o' in combination with the 3 stroke forms

1 placing 'o' on LEFT of stroke

2 " " RIGHT



Hooked forms in combination with strokes

*inverted*

Purely stroke forms



Fig. 7.—Building Up Letters

and would undoubtedly lead to the maintenance of a higher standard of penmanship. The value of experiences in the art-room in connexion with nature work, lettering—in which



all children delight—and handwriting, cannot be over-estimated, and should be an essential element at some stage in the course of development of the child. Being, if only for a limited time, in such an environment, may have a

Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary  
had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb.

Fig. 8.—Age 8 years. 54 letters per minute

profound effect on his attitude to life and inspire a love of beautiful things which he might not otherwise acquire.

Many interesting experiments have been carried out from time to time in recent developments in handwriting. For example, in Mr. Graily Hewitt's delightful Oxford copy-

books, we go back to the beautiful writing of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The various specimens of writing of different sizes are most attractive and reach a splendid standard. The only criticisms which can be made are that

Mary had a little lamb Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little.

Fig. 9.—Age 8 years 80 letters per minute

special pens are required, and that writing between lines to such an extent would affect injuriously the rhythmical nature of the writing which is necessary in the attainment of speed. In the Dudley Writing Cards, which find favour

with Mr. Edward Johnston, the special features are that linking is taught from the beginning and that the child acquires the habit of writing without the use of lines.

Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary  
had a little lamb. Mary had a little lamb  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little lamb Mary  
had a little lamb Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb Mary had  
a little lamb Mary had a little lamb  
Mary ho

Fig. 10.—Age 13 years. 55 letters per minute

Among the illustrations (figs. 8-11) are to be found the results of actual speed tests. In the investigation, the children were simply told to write as quickly as they could. It was

not a question of beautiful writing; the only objective was speed. Each example is from five minutes' work, and the age of the child is given. Some important points emerge from a study of these specimens. Although the time test

Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary had  
a little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Mary  
had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb. Mary  
had a little lamb. Mary had a  
little lamb. Mary had a little  
lamb. Mary had a little

Fig. 11.—Age 13 years. 89 letters per minute

was much longer than that of similar experiments in America with the same material—Mary had a little lamb—there is practically no indication of tiredness. As a rule, the letters at the end of the test are as legible as at the beginning. This is, in itself, a matter of considerable interest as showing that rapid writing—at top speed—even with very young children

causes no exhaustion, and, in fact, proves that at a very early age automatism had been reached satisfactorily.

Another point of considerable interest is that, though very many of the children tested had only transferred from cursive to script writing for about two years, there was practically no indication of cursive habits. In other words, the transference was complete. This is very remarkable, as the persistence of special characteristics can be traced very readily when the writing of an aged person is compared with that of his school days. As we have seen, such characteristics are of peculiar value in the detection of forgeries.

In the process of reorganizing education on the lines of the Hadow Report, the position of handwriting is clear. The child at the close of the junior school period should have completed his education in this subject, and should not only have acquired a good legible hand but his writing should have become automatic. The child who does not write well on leaving the junior school will probably never do so. Handwriting should find no place in the curriculum of the senior school.

The subject of analysing the character of a person by a study of his handwriting is clearly outside the purview of this memorandum. Graphologists have long ago made extravagant claims in this direction which cannot be justified. Nevertheless, it is a matter of considerable interest. A scholarly statement of the possibilities and limitations of this branch of science is fully dealt with in *The Psychology of Handwriting* and *Experiments with Handwriting*, by Mr. Robert Saudek, who is a recognized expert in handwriting.